SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

AN APOLOGY FOR POETRY



MASTER ACADEMY

MASTER CRITICAL

STUDY

TO

SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

AN APOLOGY FOR POETRY

Revised & Enlarged Edition

MASTER ACADEMY
SHAHEEN BLOCK MUJAHID TOWN LAHORE

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1

The Life and Personality of Sir Philip Sidney

Introduction

Sidney, the ideal gentleman, the Sir Calidore of Spenser's "Legend of Courtesy", is vastly more interesting as a man than as a writer, and the student is recommended to read his biography rather than his books. His life expresses, better than any single literary work, the two ideals of the age—personal honour and national greatness. The Earl of Essex, a few moments before his death and soon after his arrival in Ireland where he had gone to take high official office with Sidney in his train is reported to have observed: "If he goes on in the course he had begun, he will be as famous and worthy a gentleman as ever England bred." He was so fond of this handsome youngman that he wanted to make him as his son-in-law: "I wish that he might match with my daughter... He is so wise, virtuous, and godly."

His Birth and Parentage

Philip Sidney was born on the 30th November, 1554, in the beautiful historic mansion of Penshurst, in Kent—Sir Henry Sidney his father, being engaged at this time in the thankless task of governing Ireland. His mother Lady Mary Dudley was a daughter of the Duke of Northumberland, the nobleman whose schemes as queen maker lost his head, and it was at this tragic period of their family history that Sidney's life began.

His Childhood

Queen Mary had acceded to the throne of England a few months before Sidney was born. It was her husband Philip of Spain, and the widowed Duchess of Northumberland, Sidney's grandmother, who were the dismal sponsors at his baptism. His attendants had come under the prevailing gloom of that period, and it is perhaps due to these surroundings that Sidney's thoughts inclined to a serious cast.

At School

Sidney pas ed the days of his childhood at Penshurst and from Penshurst he was taken to Ludlow Castle and from there he was sent to the distinguished Shrewsbury School. At school, he proved himself a shining star; when quite a child, he could write letters in French and Latin, and was ever an eager pupil. After a brilliant career at Shrewsbury Sidney went to Christ Church, Oxford, at the age of fourteen. While at School he had cultivated friendship with Fulke Greville, afterwards Lord Brooke—a friendship that lasted through life, and it is interesting to note that it was Fulke Greville who became the first biographer of Sidney.

His Great Friend

Fulke Greville developed a very profound admiration and affection for Sidney and this affection never ceased. This friendship took such deep roots that Greville desired to have inscribed on his tomb: "Friend to Sir Philip Sidney." It is also recorded that Sidney's fascination extended amongst many others. His tutor at Christ Church also left directions for the following inscription to be recorded on his tombstone: "Sidney has been my pupil."

At Elizabeth's Court

After having graduated from the University of Oxford. Sidney could not find it difficult to enter the Court of Queen Elizabeth; the entrance being facilitated by his uncle, the Earl of Leicester, who. at that time was a great favourite of the Queen. It was the Earl again who got him introduced to the all-powerful man of the time, Sir William Cecil, who afterwards came to be known as Lord Burghley. It was while spending a vacation at Hampton Court with the family of Lord Burghley that Sidney's magnetism was again noticeable. His host, a man of the world, discovers Sidney so attractive that he was at first anxious to have him as a husband for his daughter, but Sidney was discarded for a wealthier suitor. Subsequently a marriage was arranged with the Earl of Oxford and we can quite understand that two young rivals who were fated to see so much of each other at court, could never become friends.

A Tour of the Continent

After some time Sidney left England for a tour on the continent, lasting three years. A great deal of this period was spent in Venice, where his studies extended over many subjects, including astronomy and music The great Italian painters made a deep and lasting impression on him. History and Italian literature added to the study of Tasso were amongst the many interests that laid hold of Sidney; at the end of his three years' foreign experience Sidney returned to England as an accomplished writer.

Love-Affair at Kenilworth

In 1576 Sidney was staying with his uncle Leicester at Kenilworth, where the queen was regaled with one of the most elaborate entertainments on record. It is probable that Shakespeare who lived only a short distance away may have been brought to Kenilworth to see the wonderful scenes. After Kenilworth festivities Sidney went with the Queen and Court to visit the Earl of Essex at Chartley castle. It is here that he fell in love with Penelope, the Earl's twelve-year-old daughter. As we have seen, the Earl was most anxious for the match, his dying words being in praise of his young friend. But though no marriage was to take place, the attachment inspired Sidney to address a series of sonnets to the lady, whom he called "Stella", and Sidney, for the purpose of these literary effusions named himself "Astrophel". This beautiful friendship continued, with the approval of Sidney's wife after "Stella's marriage, almost to the end of his life".

Sidney's Diplomatic Missions

By dint of his hard work and keen understanding, Sidney, at the early age of twenty-three, was entrusted by Queen Elizabeth to carry congratulatory messages to the Elector Palatine at Heidelberg, and the new Emperor Rudolph the second, at Prague. The Queen's government also ordered him to visit Antwerp to congratulate the Prince of Orange on the birth of a son. William the Silent who was never known to waste words, came under the spell of Sidney's charm, and declared "that in Sidney the Queen of England had one of the greatest and ripest counsellors that could be found in Europe." Although his diplomatic missions were so great a success, he quickly lost the ground he had gained with the Queen through his defence of his father's exertions as Lord Deputy in Ireland, and his opposition to Elizabeth's projected marriage with the Duke of Anjou.

Estrangement With Elizabeth

At this time the Queen heard of the secret marriage of her favourite Leicester, and all Leicester's family, including Sidney, suffered from her anger. Sidney was not sorry to leave the Court, and we find him becoming an accupant in the house of his sister, the Countess of Pembroke, with a sense of relief. It was here, in this house at Wiltshire, that Sidney wrote his famous romance, *Arcadia.*

Reconciliation With the Queen

After a lapse of a few years, he sought reconciliation with the Queen, not unsuccessfully, and received official promotion—that of Steward to the Bishop of Winchester, while he also became a Member

of Parliament for Kent. In 1583 a Knighthood was bestowed, and more promotion followed; he was appointed Joint-Master of the Ordnance, and in the autumn of the same year he married, at the age of twenty-nine, the daughter, who was only fourteen, of Sir Francis Walsingham.

The Last Days

Part of the ensuing three years of Sir Philip Sidney's short life were passed amid new scenes. Soon after his marriage Sidney accepted with gratitude the Queen's orders to accompany his uncle Leicester to the Netherlands to help in checking the career of Spain. In one of his encounters, that at Zutphen, he was wounded fatally on September 22, 1586. It was here again that there occurred the famous incident of the soldier and the cup of water. Sidney saw the man suffering and put the cup from his own lips saying : "Thy necessity is yet greater than mine." Sidney died at Arnhem on October 17, 1586, and thus came the end of a promising and colourful personality in the prime of his youth.

Sidney's Position

A brilliant career was thus cut short in the bloom of his youth who gave up his ghost at the age of 32. According to A. C. Baugh :

> In three directions to be sure, Sidney's actual achievement ranks him among the very highest of the Elizabethan writers. None but Shakespeare and Spenser produced a finer sonnet sequence. None but Ben Jonson surpassed him as a literary critic. None of the writers of his age approached his influence in the field of prose romance.

> The fantastic lights and shadows of his fortune, playing over the high spirited constancy of his disposition, ripened his romantic genius and gave him the unique place that he held among his contemporaries and yet holds with us. The grandson of a duke, godson of a king, nephew to four earls, brother-in-law of an earl, brother of an earl, and uncle to three earls he was himself, through nearly all his life, an untitled commoner. Throughout his life he was poor, yet within easy expectation of huge wealth. A special favourite of the Queen and of the most powerful peers, he was without public influence and frequently deprived of ordinary personal liberty. Had he lived two years longer, he might have become earl of Leicester, as his brother Robert later did : but the only title which he infact received, that of knight, was granted for the sorriest of public reasons and brought him neither commendation nor reward. . The grotesque alternations of fate manifested in his own family strengthened his romanticism, his sense of

> strangeness of life ; the uncertainties and disappointments of his own career heightened in him that democratic independence of mind which makes romanticism potent. Had he been less brilliantly connected or had he himself held a more splendid position, his impact upon literature would probably have been smaller. Master Philip Sidney could befriend Spenser without patronage ; the heir presumptive of the Earl of Leicester could practise innovation without suspicion of demogoguery, and get a hearing for his innovation.

The most fitting tribute to the memory of this great English gentleman, soldier and statesman, was paid by William Watson in verse :

> Rememberest thou the perfect knight
> The soldier. courtier hard in one,
> Sidney, that pensive Hesper light
> O'er chivalry's departed sun.

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Sidney's Literary Achievements

Sidney as a Writer

As a writer Sidney is known by three principal works,all published after his death, showing how little importance he attached to his own writing, even when he was encouraging Spenser. "Less brilliant than Marlowe, less witty than Lyly, inferior to Spenser in glamour and excelled by many a contemporary song writer in deftness of fancy, he has produced a body of work which for its versatile excellence places him in the foremost rank of his time." No wonder Richard Hakluyt should acclaim him as "the secretary of eloquence, the breath of the Muses and the honie-bee of the daintiest flowers of wit and art."

The Arcadia

As a writer, Sidney is remembered for three principal works, as stated above, the first of which is *Arcadia*. The *Arcadia* is a pastoral romance, interspersed with eclogues, in which shepherds and shepherdesses sing of the delights of rural life. Though the work was taken up as a summer's pastime, it became immensely popular and was imitated by a hundred poets.

The *Arcadia* was written primarily by Sidney to please his sister, the Countess of Pembroke. In essence it is romance with a pastoral flavouring.

The Old Arcadia

This was written about 1581 for what is now known as the *Old Arcadia*, *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* in its original sense—a work which till 1926 had only been written in a very incomplete form. Sidney's original purpose was to devise a light pastoral tale beautified with rustic verse after the fashion of Sannazaro's Italian *Arcadia* (1504) ; but Sidney's spirit was of more virile cast, and from the start his story showed less similarity to Sannazaro than to the wilder, earlier fictions of Heliodorous and Achilles Tatius. His first *Arcadia* is divided into five books

or "acts", separated by lengthy intercalations termed "eclogues", which are partly verse (both conventional and quantitative) and partly prose, partly narrative and partly lyrical. The main story, handled in the "acts" has much the quality and structure of one of the tragi-comedies which Sidney's name-sake, Philip Massinger, later wrote for the seventeenth century stage. "Mystery, variety, suspense, and thrilling episodes are the tools he works with. The story begins with disguise, the disguise of the princes Pyrocles and Musidorus ; and with mystery, the strangely retired and fearful life, led by King Barilius and his family ; and it culminates like a modern detective story in the rational but quite unguessable solution of a portentous series of suspected crimes."

The New Arcadia

Presumably Sidney was impelled to rewrite the *Arcadia* by the classical and neo-classical studies that he made for his *Defence of Poesy*. The *New Arcadia* is an attempt to turn a romance into a prose epic which should have the unified complexity and the dignity that the Renaissance Aristotelians demanded. The style is heightened, and the narrative instead of starting at the beginning (i.e. with the oracle of Basilius), opens more or less Virgilian fashion with an unexplained shipwreck. The earlier adventures of the heroes in Asia Minor, which had been narrated in the supplementary "eclogues" of the *Old Arcadia*, are woven into the old story of the *New Arcadia*. Most important of all, the epic dignity of warfare is imposed upon the pastoral plot by the creation of entirely new characters and incidents more akin to *Amadis of Gaul* and *Morte d'Arthur* than to anything in the *Old Arcadia*.

A Pastoral Romance

With all its faults, Sidney's *Arcadia* marks a well-defined stage in the history of the novel. Though in its essence it is romance with a pastoral flavouring, there is more characterization and more movement though less humour, than we find Lyly's *Euphues*. With Lily's *Euphues* it may take its place as one of the dominant influences of the time. Professor Raleigh has well said that the "*Arcadia* is in some sort a half way house between the older romances of chivalry and the long-winded heroic romances of the seventeenth century. Action and adventure are already giving way to the description of sentiment, or are remaining merely as a frame on which the diverse coloured flowers of sentiment may be broidered."

Astrophel and Stella

Besides being a prose-romancer Sidney was also a poet and a distinguished sonneteer. His poetical works fill three volumes in Grossarts' edition. They comprise nearly a hundred and fifty sonnets, many songs or musical setting, pastoral narratives and dialogues, epithalamia and other occasional verse, translations of French and Latin poetry, and metrical versions of the psalms of

David. They illustrate all the different forms of the sonnet and all the chief metres employed in English and in Latin versification. The *Astrophel and Stella* sequence—one hundred and eight sonnets and eleven songs—contains about a third of Sidney's extant poetry, and the metrical insertions in the *Arcadia* another third. It was *Astrophel and Stella*, apparently, that the Elizabethans mainly thought of in connection with Sidney's name; and it is as the author of *Astrophel and Stella* that posterity also best remembers him.

Fiction or Fact

It cannot be said to what extent these poems are autobiographical in character. How much of the content of these sonnets is actual fact and how much imaginary and dramatic, we cannot say. Evelyn S. Shuckburgh believes that "the passion is merely a poet's passion, not wholly fictitious and yet not to be construed literally, nor all its various hot and cold fits interpreted to the letter. It was the fashion of expiring chivalry for each knight to have a lady, to whom he was attached by a passion not wholly spiritual, nor wholly of the earth. Dante and Beatrice, Petrarch and Laura, were perhaps the models on which such dramatic emotions were framed, and Lord Surrey's famous devotion to Geraldine was a more recent example. Editors of Sidney's works have chosen to interpret *Astrophel and Stella* literally; and have disputed on the order, as it stands, is right; but I cannot think the poems themselves are biographical in the ordinary sense, or they present material for a real history of events. They are something more; they are the history of a great soul touched with passion; they are greater than mere facts, just as tragedy is greater, because more universal than history."

Autobiographical

But according to modern critics autobiographical sincerity asserted in many of them is evident in nearly all; not to recognize it disqualifies the critic. According to Tucker Brooke: "They report the feeling of an earnest and emotionally delayed youth for a young girl with whom he had almost contracted a marriage of convenience in her childhood and with whom he had been on matter-of-course relations by reasons of her mother's marriage to his uncle. Sidney seems to have looked into his heart only after she was betrothed to another. Penelope apparently escaped seduction, having another lover to whom she was more faithful than to her husband; but she came near enough to it to set in motion all the pulses of Sidney's being, and his sonnets, with the interspersed songs that punctuate and interpret them, form one of the greatest love poems in the language, as flawless in its psychology as in its rhythms. It is, as Hazlitt called *Romeo and Juliet*, the story of Hamlet in love. But though love, essentially noble, is the dominant love."

An Apology for Poetry

The most important contribution of Sidney, however, to the world of letters is his distinguished critical tract, *An Apology for Poetry*. Sidney's object here is the defence, not so much of poetry as of Romance. In his defence of poetry, he writes that the earliest and the greatest writers of all countries, such as Musaeus, Homer, Hesiod, in Greece (not to mention Orpheus and Linus) Livius, Andronicus and Ennius among the Romans, Dante, Boccacio and Petrarch in Italy, Chaucer and Gower among the English were all poets. Even the philosophers in Greece used poetry, and Plato himself was a poet against his will. Herodotus called his nine books after the Muses ; and he and all historians have stolen and usurped things of poetry. Wales, Ireland, "the most barbarous and simple Indians", are cited. The poet was given such a great importance by the Romans that he was called *vates*, a prophet. Even Englishmen look upon him as a 'maker' since he carries that title from the Greeks. All other arts and sciences limit themselves to nature ; the poet alone transcends nature, improves it, nay, brings himself ("let it not be deemed too saucy a comparison") in some sort into competition with the Creator Himself whom he imitates.

Kinds of Poetry

The kinds of imitation are then surveyed—"Divine", "Philosophical", and that of the third or right sort, who only imitate to invent and improve, which neither divine nor philosophical poets can do. These classes are subdivided according to their matter—heroic, tragic, comic etc.—or according to the sorts of verses they liked best to write in, "for indeed the greatest part of poets have apparelled their poetical inventions in that numerous kind of writing which is called verse—indeed but apparelled, verse being but an ornament and no cause to poetry." And again "it is not rhyming and versing that maketh a poet." Xenophon and Heliodorous were both poets in prose.

As to the abuses of poetry, they are but abuses, and do not take away the use, as is proved by a great number of stock examples. It is therefore a matter of great surprise that England has grown so hard a step-mother to poets. They are bad enough as a rule, no doubt ; though Chaucer did excellently considering his time.

Conclusion

This is, in short, the abstract of Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* and the importance of this manifesto, both symptomatically and typically, can hardly be exaggerated. "The Apology" is one of the first critical essays in English ; and though its style now seems laboured and unnatural—the pernicious result of Euphues and his school—it is still one of the best expressions of the place and meaning of poetry in any language.

3

Sidney and the Renaissance Criticism
Or
Sidney and the Critical Tradition
Or
Trends in Renaissance Criticism

Renaissance Defined

The term 'Renaissance' means 'rebirth'. It is used specifically to denote the great spiritual and mental rebirth which marked the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern world. As the fifteenth century drew to its close in England, the past was seen with a clearer and a truer vision, and the mental horizon receded. The new spirit was critical, in revolt against authority ; men started to think for themselves, and to question accepted beliefs. Above all, there was in the air a fresh enthusiasm which urged men to enter into every field of experience. Renaissance was infact a revolt against the "other-worldly" view of life. The most rational definition of the term 'Renaissance' comes to us from D. C. Somerval who defines it as a reassertion of "this-worldly view of life". He defines it as "the re-assertion of this world as a place of boundless glorious possibilities and of man being capable of realizing these boundless glorious possibilities in himself." "For the first time", says another critic, "since the civilisation of ancient Rome had crumbled away before the inroads of the Northern barbarians, England following in the wake of Italy and France, stirred from the slumber of the spirit to which her ignorance of her past, her unsettled history, and the authority of the Church had condemned her." With the advent of the fifteenth century, signs of new life became more and more apparent. It is, of course, not a period of production, but of preparation. One comes across a steady growth of influences which were to contribute to the great intellectual awakening of the century following. These influences may be elaborated under the following headings.

The Revival of Learning

The origin of these influences is to be sought in the Italian revival of learning. It is generally believed that the New Learning came about through the capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453. The scholars fled to Italy which in turn became the fountain-head of the New Learning. In the latter half of the 15th century, France, England and Germany sent their scholars to drink of this wonderful new spring of inspiration. In the Middle Ages, the ancient Greeks were unknown. Because of the New Learning, not only the poetry of Homer but the philosophy of Plato, and the criticism and science of Aristotle were revealed to the wondering eyes of the awakening West. The men who did most to bring to England Greek and all that its study entailed was William Grocynn (1446-1519). He, an Oxford Fellow, went to Rome, Padua and Florence to England in 1492 : he taught Greek both to Erasmus and to Sir Thomas More.

Humanism

This re discovery and re-interpretation of antiquity gave birth to a new culture – that of humanism. The word, humanist, however, has also a wider implication ; it means an interest in humanity. And the humanists were directed by the classics to a new and ardent interest in mankind. The revival began, as we have learned, with Petrarch and Boccaccio in the fourteenth century, but it is with the fifteenth that we enter the great age of Italian Humanism, when wealthy men, like the Florentine banker, Cosimo de Medici, and his grandson, Lorenzo the Magnificent, became munificent patrons of scholarship and the arts, when monastic libraries were ransacked and innumerable long-forgotten treasures of Greek and Latin literature brought to light, and when a boundless enthusiasm for classic studies swept through a whole educated community.

Hudson's View

According to Hudson, in the development of literature this revival of learning worked in two ways : it did much to emancipate thought from the bondage of mediaeval theology by restoring the generous spirit and ideals of pagan antiquity ; and it presented writers with literary masterpieces which they might take as models for their own efforts. For these two reasons the Renaissance is rightly regarded as a chief force in the making of modern European literatures.

The Spirit of Independence

Owing to the influence of the New Learning there was an ardent revival in the study of Greek. The new classical influences were a great inspiration. They tempered and polished the earlier rudeness

of English literature They enriched English language with hundreds of valuable words. But, at the same time, the outlook of the writers was by no means narrow. In the words of Emile Legouis :

> For all the extensive borrowing from abroad and avowed respect for ancient precedents and traditional rules of conduct, and inspite of the passing which temporarily made a law of the strange or the eccentric, the general impression conveyed is one of free and frank boldness. A wide initiative was left to individuals. This is apparent if the language and versification, the common instruments of poets be studied.

In short the outlook of the writers was broad and independent. They set at naught tyrannical rules of grammar and versification and attempted new styles and manners.

Literary Criticism

Now, coming to our main subject, i.e. literary criticism, during the Renaissance and the 17th century, we come across five more or less distinct stages of development, and in all the stages, it is the Latin influence which predominates. Before we analyse the evolution of literary criticism in the Age of Shakespeare, we must note that from the year 1000 A.D —the rather imaginary line between 'Dark' and 'Middle'—to the beginning of the sixteenth century, we meet practically nothing that can be called a critical treatise of substantive importance except the solitary and in some respects, rather puzzling, but extraordinarily valuable, document of the *De Vulgari Eloquid* by Dante. Critical literature in English language was probably not written before 1524, about which date Leonard Coxe wrote probably an adaptation of *Melanchthon*. A few lines in "The Monk's Tale" (The Canterbury Tales) of Chaucer (1340 ?-1400) give us his vague idea of tragedy ; but he was more interested in telling stories than passing comments on literature.

Independence of the Critic

It is for the first time in the period of Renaissance that English criticism develops itself, if not with entire independence, yet with sufficient conformity to its own needs. It has however to be admitted that, as J. W. H. Atkins has stated that "for the beginnings of modern literary criticism we must look to Italy of the 14th and 15th centuries, to that formative period of the Renaissance which had drawn its inspiration from the Revival of Learning and the renewed study of the classical literatures of ancient Greek and Rome."

In Roger Ascham and his contemporaries we notice the first realization of the need to establish principles of writing. As the previous century lacked good poetry, critics turned to the classics

for the guides and models. The *Ars Poetica* of Horace had been more or less known throughout the Middle Ages. But the *Poetics* of Aristotle, regarded as a master document of theorizing was actually discovered in the 16th century from the abridged Arabic version of Averroes.

The Salient Features

One of the important and persistent preoccupations of the 16th century literary theorists has been the enumeration of types. Dante in his Latin essay, *De Vulgari Eloquentia* came out with a strong defence of vernacular poetry and asserted the dignity and poetic availability of the emergent vernacular. In the mid-16th century the *Deffence* of Du Bellay emphasized the possibility that the vernacular may be enriched by plunder and adaptation of all the finest vocabulary of the classics. "Visit the ancients and strip them of their wealth". Vida has said repetitiously, in each part of his *De Arte Poetica*, developing the late classical doctrine about the imitation of models in a different direction.

Cultivation of Quantitative Vernacular Meters

Another important line of the Renaissance literary speculation could be noticed in a succession of "misguided attempts by Italian, French and English literature to cultivate quantitative vernacular metres." According to Wimsatt and Brooks : "In England the "rules" of Drant preceded the experiments of Harvey and Spenser, and of "Areopagus", Dyer and Sidney. It is difficult to imagine anything more thoroughly self-refuting than the example of this workmanship offered by Webb in his *Discourse of-Poesie* (1586), the song in Spenser's Fourth Eclogue turned into sapphire. A related phenomenon was the classically-minded attack on rhyme (as a monkish and beggarly barbaism), which extended from the 16th century even into the early 18th, many years after the structural triumph of rhyme in the Augustan couplet. The reasons for the success and necessity of English rhyme, especially in lyric and in witty satirical verse, lie in such practical differences between the vernacular and classical languages as that between stress and quantity and in the absence from the vernacular of the classical morphology and hence the relative ease of avoiding the logical (and antimetrical) figure of *homoioteleuton* (similar things). Rhyme, says George Puttenham, a courtier theorist in the great age of Elizabeth, "is all the sweetness and harmony of our vulgar poesie". But at the same time he says it was brought into Greek and Latin by "Barbarous soldiers out of the Campe" This was typical and casual enough. The better known and more deliberate attacks are that of Campion in his *Observations in the Art of English Poesie* (1602) (answered by Daniel in *A Defence of Rhyme*, 1603 ?) and the later note prefixed by Milton to *Paradise Lost*—perhaps at the request of a publisher apprehensive

about the side-effect of a current courtly controversy in which rhyme had so able a defender as Dryden. Milton avoided the difficulty of carrying rhyme through the vast, discursive effort of his epic. A "trouble-some and modern bondage", he called it, used by some poets "much to their vexation, hindrance and constraint to express many things otherwise, and for the most part worse than else they would have expressed them". The court controversy concerned drama, perhaps the weakest ground on which a champion of rhyme could choose to stand. Yet this controversy had a special theoretical interest in connection with the larger Renaissance issue of dramatic verisimilitude."

Poetic Art and Aesthetic Values

One of the greatest achievements of Renaissance Criticism was made towards a more adequate understanding of the poetic art and its aesthetic values. "In poetry", writes Guarino, "we must fix our thoughts on the underlying 'truths' rather than upon the 'imaginations' in which they are expressed"; but at the same time he adds that it was 'in purity and grace of style, in worthy deeds worthily presented, in noble thoughts nobly expressed' that he found nourishment for both mind and spirit. With this consciousness of artistic quality he then declares that poetry feeds, as nothing else, our sense of delight. But he is also careful to state that emotional effects may sometimes be harmful—a distrust characteristic of a rational age which regarded 'imagination' as a mental aberration, the view taken by Picodella Mirandola in his *De imaginatione*

Bruni's Conception of Poetry

No such qualification, however, enters into Bruni's conception of poetry. He notes, for instance, 'its formal charms, the variety and interest of its subject matter', and above all 'its, peculiar affinity to our emotions and intelligence'. Its emotional effects he describes as a 'sort of uplifting of the soul', such as men are wont to experience at sacred moments; and he unequivocally declares poetry to be "an ennobling form of pleasure", which has by our very constitution a stronger attraction for us than any other form of expression. Here, then, for the first time psychological considerations were being brought to bear on literary theorizing; and Bruni attributes not a little of the poetic effect to the peculiar affinity of rhythm and metre to the human constitution. Not only he, it was commonly held, on the authority of Pythagoras and Socrates, that music had a soothing and refreshing influence on the mind, and was thus an aid to the inner harmony of the soul.

Function of Poetry

One great concern of the 16th century critics was regarding the real function of poetry. We come across for the first time new ideas

put forward by them. "The Horatian formula", writes Atkins, "of 'delight and instruction' had been familiar to the Middle Ages; and the ethical function of poetry was generally maintained at this date. Now, however stress was also laid on poetry as a civilizing factor in history. It was a commonplace of antiquity, applied to poetry, philosophy and oratory in turn, that from the first such activities had been great civilizing agencies, rendering services of a social, political and religious kind; and this idea, handed on by Cicero and Horace, became one of the main doctrines of Humanistic critics. The chief function of poetry was held to be that of refining and elevating humanity. Action being the test of all studies, poetry was valued in that it conduced to righteous and noble action."

Dramatic Criticism

Along with a deep concern for the value and function of poetry, the writers of the 16th century showed a keen interest in one of the glories of Elizabethan literature, namely, the drama. From the early Tudor period evidence had been forthcoming of the abounding vitality of the popular stage, with its miracles, moralities and interludes, forms of medieval origin that gradually developed under classical and Italian influences into the more artistic creations of Lily, Marlowe and Kyd. But, throughout the century men had been groping confusedly for expression of a dramatic kind; and yet except for Sidney's comments and the conventional statements of Webbe and Puttenham we hardly find any significant comments on the plays produced or for theorizing on the dramatic art itself.

Roger Ascham

Meanwhile a new critical phase was inaugurated by Roger Ascham (1515-1568) who was tutor to Elizabeth when he was in his sixteenth year. He was the author of two famous though small books *Toxophilus* (1545) and *The Schoolmaster* (1570). He used English to further "the pleasure of commodities of the gentlemen and Yeomen of *Englande*". For one thing, he submits definite views on both comedy and tragedy. His conception of comedy is that of Plautus and Terence and he states that its themes are taken from ordinary life, that they treat of no weighty matters and are confined to stories concerning 'hard fathers, foolish mothers, unthrifty youngmen, crafty servants, subtle bawds and wily harlots', the conventional types of Roman Comedy. On matters of tragedy he is yet more illuminating, his ideas being based on 'the precepts of Aristotle and Horace, with the examples of Puripides, Sophocles and Seneca as standards and models. Now for the first time, in accordance with Aristotle's teaching, the supreme value of tragedy, as compared with the epic and lyric, is urged.

Nicholas Udall and Whetstone

Significant comments on other aspects of comedy are found in Nicholas Udall's Prologue to his *Ralph Roister Doister* (1553). He describes the essence of his comedy as 'mirth mixed with virtue in decent comliness', the mirth that prolonged life and refreshed the spirits. George Whetstone (1554-87) brought out the unworthiness of contemporary plays. Condemning the taste of dramatists, not only of England, but also those of Italy, France and Spain, he presented details similar to the shortcomings of romantic themes shown by Ascham, Gosson and Sidney.

George Gascoigne

The most significant contribution to Renaissance criticism was made by George Gascoigne (1542-77). In his 'Notes of Instruction' concerning the making of verse or rhyme in English (1575) he pointed out the necessity of a good theme for a poem ; mere praise of 'crystal eyes' or 'cherry lips' or pleasing words or alliteration was not enough. He was against polysyllabic words and strange forms which only cloy the verse. Specially worthy of note, however, is his description of the sonnet, for he describes what was to be the characteristic Elizabethan form. But, his contribution to dramatic criticism was almost nil.

Stephen Gosson

Another critic of existing plays was Stephen Gosson who in his *The Schoole of Abuse* denounced almost all Elizabethan play-wrights on moral grounds. He maintained that ancient poetry was infected with pagan immorality and the contemporary stage was inciting 'popular debauchery'. In his *Plays Confuted in Five Actions* he contended "that in a truly Christian community plays could not be tolerated, because of their pagan origin, actors' playing female roles, the comedies dealing with love affairs of a degrading kind, and descriptions of cruelty and murder found in tragedies, among other things."

Sidney's "An Apology for Poetry"

Of all the critical documents of the century, Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* is not only a work of genius but also a very valuable treatise. It is indeed an epitome of Renaissance criticism. It deals with his views on the nature and function of poetry, on the three unities, on Tragedy and Comedy, on Diction and Metre. According to Spingarn "the introduction of Aristotelianism into England was the direct result of the influence of the Italian Critics ; and the agent in bringing this new influence into English letters was Sir Philip Sidney. His *Defence of Poetry*, is a veritable epitome of the literary criticism of the Italian Renaissance ; and so thoroughly is it imbued

with this spirit that no other work, Italian, French or English, can be said to give so complete and so noble a conception of the temper and principles of Renaissance criticism." Sidney defends poetry as art and asserts that it is greater than history or philosophy. According to him : "It is not rhyming and versing that maketh a poet, no more than a long gown maketh an advocate, who though he pleaded in armour, should be an advocate and no soldier, but it is that feigning notable images of virtues, vices or what else, with that delightful teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a poet by. Although indeed the senate of poets have chosen verse as their fittest raiment, meaning as in matter they passed all in all, so in manner to go beyond them ; not speaking table-talk fashion or, like men in a dream, words as they chanceably fall from the mouth, but piercing each syllable of each word by just proportion according to the dignity of the subject."

Other Contributions

The birth of literary criticism indicates the realization of the need to establish principles of writing. As the previous century lacks good poetry, critics turned to classics for their guides and models. *Firstly*, the literary criticism of the 16th century was concerned with the status and value of poetry. Gosson stigmatized poetry as immoral in his treatise, *The Schoole of Abuse.* Sidney in his *Apology* stressed the value of poetry. William Webbe, in *A Discourse of English Poetry* attempted the first historical survey of poets and poetry; and Puttenham's *The Art of English Poesie* is the first systematic consideration of poetry as an art.. *Secondly*, the literary critics of this era emphasised the importance of classical models. Ascham advocated versifying on classical models, and he was later supported by Webbe. But Puttenham held the balance even between the native and classical tradition. Finally, the literary criticism centres around the merits and demerits of rhyme. There was a debate between Campion and Daniel on the topic. While Campion condemned the rhyme in his observations on the *Art of English Poesy*, Daniel's famous *A Defence of Rhyme* asserted the right of every literature to its own genre and tradition. All the poets of the Age of Shakespeare made the best use of rhyme.

Balance-Sheet of Renaissance Criticism

After having discussed the salient features of Renaissance Criticism and the contributions of individual critics to it, it remains to discuss the outstanding features of the achievement and its significance in critical history of England. In the first place the critics of the period devoted their attention to the discussion of two big problems, namely, classical verse and classical drama.

Secondly, the critics of the age made a continuous but unregulated effort to lay anew foundations of the native literature

in the light that had dawned at the Renaissance. Many fundamental truths and principles of universal importance were also enunciated ; and they constitute the enduring part of Renaissance Criticism. No system was adopted, no authority was regarded as final. The teaching of antiquity was in general subjected to the light of Nature or reason ; and where necessary, regard was paid to native instincts and traditions.

Thirdly, the most significant feature of English Criticism at this date is the slight acquaintance shown with Aristotle's teaching, the exposition of which had largely inspired Italian theorizing. Some of his ideas had been occasionally been set forth. Glimpses of his theories appear for instance in the writings of Wills, Puttenham, Ben Jonson and Milton.

Finally, of significance too, is the attitude displayed towards certain aspects of Italian teaching. Scaliger, is perhaps the most frequently mentioned. He is referred to, for instance, by such a writer as Peacham ; and use is made elsewhere of such matters as his three-fold classification of poets, the theological, the philosophical, and poets who imitated human life. No doubt we cannot ignore the impact of the Italian writers on the masters of the contemporary English Criticism. "The truth", observes J. W. H. Atkins, "would appear to be that English Renaissance Criticism was not something which began in the sixteenth century under contemporary Italian inspiration, but was rather a continuation of medieval efforts, coloured anew by classical influences derived from fifteenth century Italian humanists, and invigorated by a constant appeal to the laws of Nature or reason."

4

Synopsis of An Apology for Poetry

Introductory

Sidney begins by telling how the right virtuous Edward Wotton and he himself, once at the Emperor's court learnt horsmanship of John Pietro Pugliano, the Imperial Equerry,[1] and recounts with pleasant irony some magnifying of his office by that officer. And thence, by an equally pleasant rhetorical turn, he slips into a defence of his office—his "unelected vocation" of poet.

Antiquity and Universality of Poetry

Poetry is the most ancient of all human activities. Were not the earliest and greatest authors of all countries, Museus, Homer, Hesiod, in Greece (not to mention Orpheus and Linus), and Livius Andronicus among the Romans, Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch in Italy, Chaucer and Gower in English—were they not all poets? Even the philosophers in Greece used poetry, and Plato himself is a poet almost against his will.

Poet as Maker

Poetry enjoys universal popularity. Herodotus called his nine books after the Muses ; and he and all his historians have stolen or usurped things of poetry. It is interesting to note that the Romans called a poet *vates*, a 'prophet' and by presumption the English regard David's Psalms a divine poem. The Greeks too looked upon the poet as a *maker* or a creator. In fact the word 'Poet' means 'Maker' or 'Creator'. He is a creator in the sense that while all other arts and sciences limit themselves to nature, the poet alone transcends nature, improves it, nay, brings himself in some sort into competition with the Creator Himself whom he imitates. The poet creates a golden world, a better, and a more perfect world than the world we live in because the poet works under the force of a divine inspiration.

Poetry Defined

Poetry is an art of imitation. It is representing, counterfeiting or figuring forth. Poetry is "speaking picture" so to say, and its end is to teach and delight.

The Divisions of Poetry

Sidney then divides poetry into three broad divisions—religious, ethical, and truly poetic. In other words it is "Divine", "Philosophical", and that of the third sort who only imitate to invent and improve, which neither divine nor philosophical poets can do. These classes are subdivided according to their matter—heroic, tragic, comic etc.—or according to the sort of verses they liked best to write in, "for indeed, the greatest part of poets have apparelled their poetical inventions in that numerous kind of writing which is called verse—indeed but apparelled verse being but an ornament and no cause to poetry." And again, "it is not rhyming and versing that maketh a poet; Xenophon and Herodotus were both poets in prose."

Poetry and Other Genres

Next Sidney weighs the right kind of poetry with philosophy, history, law etc. Then follow the parts Pastoral, comedy, tragedy etc. are by turns surveyed and defended. For instance pastoral poetry deals with the lowliest life and thus arouses sympathy with simple life and hatred for tyranny and cruelty. The elegiac poem "moves rather pity than blame". The satiric poem makes a man laugh at folly, and one feels "ashamed to laugh at himself". While comedy is an imitation of common errors in a ridiculous fashion, tragedy reveals the wickedness of men in high places and "brings home to men the uncertainty of life". Discussing the Epic Sidney says that epic poetry is "the best; and the most accomplished kind of poetry". After this, and after a stately vindication of Poetry's right to the laurel, he turns to the objections of the objectors. Although repeating the declaration that rhyming and versing make not poetry, he argues that if they were inseparable, verse is the most excellent kind of writing, far better than prose. As to the abuses of poetry, they are but abuses, and do not take away the use, as is proved by a great number of stock examples.

Superiority of Poetry

Granting that poetry is superior to all other branches of learning, it is not understandable why England has grown so hard a stepmother to poets. As a rule the English poets have not much to commend themselves but individually some of them showed excellent results. Chaucer did excellently well, considering his time *The Mirror for Magistrates* is good; so are Surrey's *Lyrics*; *The Shepherd's Calender* "hath much poetry", though the old rustic language is bad, since neither Theocritus, nor Virgil, nor Sannazzaro has it.

Sidney's Criticism

Sidney asks: what is the reason of the inferiority of the English? His answer is: "the neglect of rule". Except *Gorboduc*,

he pours ridicule on all English tragedies and still more on their mongrel tragi-comedies. "We must follow Unities", says he, "which, as it is, are neglected even in *Gorboduc*, and much more in all the rest."

Charges Against Poetry : Sidney's Reply

Sidney next turns to enumerate the charges advanced against poetry. The main charges he enumerates are as follows : first, that poetry was useless and a waste of time ; secondly that it gave rise to evil fancies and thus had a degrading and enfeebling influence ; thirdly, that it was "the mother of lies", a collection of falsehoods ; and lastly, there was the tradition that Plato had banished poets from his ideal state. The first he dismisses by asserting that poetry stood supreme in conducting to virtue. The second that poetry dealt with things untrue, however, he stoutly denies. Astronomers, physicians, historians, and others, all these, he concedes, inevitably make false statements. But he 'nothing affirms and therefore never lieth'. 'His aim is to tell you what is and not what should be. As regards the third allegation, namely, the debilitating influence of poetry on men, Sidney replies that, poets have been companions to camps since times immemorial, that they have been cherished above all by great men of action, and he ventures to add that *Orlando Furioso* or honest King Arthur would never displease a soldier.

The Last Objection

With regard to the last charge—Plato's rejection of poetry—Sidney finds the greatest difficulty in replying. He asserts that Plato was never an enemy of Poetry. In fact, what Plato had banished was not poetry but the abuse of poetry. He held poet in high esteem and regarded him as "*a light and winged and sacred thing*". In his *Ion* "he gives high and divinely commendation unto poetry".

Conclusion

Sidney concludes his tract with some remarks on versification which he would gladly have seen worked out. For he does not now seem to be in that antagonistic mood towards rhyme which Spenser's letters to Harvey discover in him. On the contrary he admits two styles, ancient and modern, the former depending on quantity, the latter depending on "number, accent and rhyme". He indeed thinks English fit for both sorts and denies "neither sweetness nor majesty" to rhyme, but is, like almost all his contemporaries and followers (except Gascoigne partially) in a fog as to "numbers" and Caesura. The actual end comes a little abruptly by an exhortation of some length, half humorous, half serious, to all and sundry, to be "no more to jest at the reverent title of a rhymer".

5

Detailed Summary of An Apology for Poetry

Occasion of Sidney's 'Apology'

The immediate occasion which called forth Sidney's commendable defence of poetry was the virulent attack on drama and poetry launched by Stephen Gosson in his *The Schoole of Abuse* : Containing a pleasant invective against Poets, Pipers, Players, Jesters, and such like Caterpillars of a Commonwealth : Setting up the flag of defiance to their mischievous exercise, and overthrowing their Bulworks, by profane writers, natural reason, and common experience : A Discourse as pleasant for them that favour learning, as profitable for all that will follow virtue.

This work appeared in 1579 and was dedicated to Sidney himself. He was a young puritan convert and only one among the Puritan antagonists of the growing popularity of poetry, in England as well as in Italy and Germany. He had in early life written poems and plays ; but about 1578-79 was caught by the Puritan feeling that was growing up against plays, and ceased writing for the stage. After the publication of *The Schoole of Abuse*, he brought out its second part, *An Apologie of the Schoole of Abuse*. Though Sidney shows throughout his defence of poetry that he is answering various criticisms and common prejudices, yet a few extracts from *The Schoole of Abuse* will show that he must also have had his work in his mind. *The Schoole of Abuse*, however, though containing general reflections on poets, is mainly concerned with the dramatic poets and the corruptions of the theatres. It is therefore when Sidney comes to speak of plays that he mostly has Gosson in mind.

Other Reflections on Poetry

Of the more general reflections on poets, to which Sidney's answer refers, these specimens will suffice :

(a) "These are the cuppes of *Circes*, that turne reasonable creatures into brute beasts, the balles of Hippomenes that hinder the course of Atalanta ; and the blocks of Divel

that are caste in our wayes, to cut off the race of toward wittes. No marveyle though Plato shut them out of his Schoole, and banished them quite out of his common wealth, as effeminate writers, unprofitable members, and utter enemies to vertue."

(b) "Dion sayth that English men could suffer watching and labour, hunger and thirst, and bear all stormes with hed and shoulders...The men in valure not yeelding to Scithia, the women in courage passing the Amazons. The exercise of both was shootyng and darting, running and wrestling, and trying such maisteries, as eyther consisted in swiftness of feete, agilitie of body, strength of armes or Martiall discipline. But the exercise that is nowe among us is banqueting, playing, pipying and dauncing, and all suche delights as may win us to pleasure or rocke us to sleepe."

"Therefore let me hold the same proposition still, which I set down before, and drewe out of Tully, that ancient Poetes are fathers of lies, Pipes of vanitie, and schooles of Abuse."

These generally are the charges against poetry which called forth the reply of the *Apologie*. Moreover Sidney had this whole background in mind which gave an added urgency to the problem of relationship between literature and society. The Essay was published after the author's death in 1595 but must have been written over ten years before. Two editions appeared in the same year but under two different titles—*The Defence of Poesie* and *An Apologie for Poesie.*

The Line of Defence

The line of defence followed by Sidney was determined by the line of attack which was conventional, and bitter. Puritans of all ages have, in substance repeated the arguments of Gosson that 'poets, pipers and jesters are, the caterpillars of the commonwealth', corrupters and plague-spots of society, diffusers of enchanting lies and immoral influences; and they have invoked the name of Plato to remind their readers how the great philosopher categorically refused to admit the mimetic artists into his ideal state. The reply to such a charge is bound to lay the greatest emphasis on the didactic aspect of the imaginative literature to prove that poetry is an efficient instrument of nourishing the mind and promoting the moral health of its readers and the delight yielded by it is only subservient to the communication of truth and goodness.

The First Section

Sidney starts with conventional reasons why poetry should be specially valued. He says that once he and Edward Wotton

were both together at the court of the Emperor in Vienna. There they received lessons in horsemanship from John Pietro Pugliano, the officer incharge of the royal stables. Being a great admirer of horsemanship, Pugliano maintained that soldiers were the noblest estate of mankind and horsemen the noblest of soldiers. They were the masters of war and ornaments of peace ; speedy goers and strong abiders, triumphers both in "camps and courts". If horsemanship deserved so much of praise, so did the horse, whom, he regarded, as a peerless beast, a beast of great beauty, faithfulness and courage.

From Pugliano, Sidney proceeds to discuss the nature and usefulness of poetry itself.

Antiquity and Universality of Poetry

The first section of Sidney's essay is concerned with the antiquity, the universality of poetry. From the earliest times poetry is held in the highest esteem. Poetry is the mother of all knowledge—the first light-giver to ignorance in all nations and languages ; the earliest Greek philosophers and historians, says Sidney, had really been poets ; and, moreover, poets from the first had flourished in all the countries of the world, among the Turks, and American Indians, for instance, as well as among the early Irish and ancient Britons nearer home.

Sidney, then, calls our attention to the reverence paid to the poet, first, by the Romans who had called him *vates*, a 'prophet', or seer, a person who had the god-given power of seeing into the life of things, and secondly, by the Greeks who had honoured him, with the, name of 'poet', that is, 'maker' or 'creator',—a description suggestive of divinity, and therefore above all others. Naturally, nothing can be higher in the hierarchy of human understanding than this faculty of making.

Nature and Function of Poetry

Sidney includes all imaginative literature under the head of poetry. Even the early writers of history used the manner of poets. Herodotus had all the qualities of a poet. Same was the case with Xenophon. His political romance of Cyrus, as well as Herodotus's "Nine Muses" were really "heroical poems" or epics. Even Plato was a poet ; those who failed to see in his *Dialogues* flowers of poetry did never walk into Appollo's garden. Moreover he categorically denies that it is not rhyming or versing that makes a poet ; in short verse to him is but an ornament and no cause to poetry.

Poetry as Fruit of Inspiration

Sidney next tries to represent what to him was the essential nature of poetry. He is convinced of the fact that poetry is a divine

gift. In more than one place he affirms the working of a divine breath in poetry.

Definition of Poetry

Sidney defines poetry in very rational terms. According to him poetry is essentially an art of 'imitation' in accordance with Aristotelian theory, and that its function, as stated by Horace, is to teach and delight To quote his own words : "Poesy, therefore, is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word Mimesis, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting or figuring forth : to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture : with this end, to teach and delight."

Idealization of Nature

Poetry does not only idealize nature ; it goes higher still. Poetry idealizes humanity itself, as we can all see in the Aeneas, the Cyrus, the Orlando, the Pylades, the Theagenes created by poetic imagination. Sidney at the same time does not forget to add that no disrespect to God is meant when the word 'Creator' is used with reference to the poet. A poet is an inventor or creator of new and unknown things and his process of creation is not imitation of Nature but a rivalry of her own working. He relies not on the units supplied by her but on the power and energy of his own wit or inventive faculty.

Poet and Nature

The world created by a poet says Sidney is better and happier than the world of Nature, because it is idea of beauty, goodness and virtue. "Nature's world is brazen and the poet alone is able to deliver a golden. The poets have furnished not only richer and livelier pictures of the earth and natural objects, but also perfect models of true love, constant friendship, genuine bravery and heroism, true kinship and all excellences worthy of man, in living, creative and attractive forms. It is hardly necessary to state that the skill of the artist consists in the 'idea or fore-conceit of the work itself'. This translation of 'idea' into a concrete form is not wholly imaginary like castles in the air, but a substantial thing, the prototype which may produce a large progeny of types or copies in the real world, provided men are able to understand the aim and purpose of the poet, the maker of those forms."

Finally, he states that the representatives of other arts such as the astronomer, the physician, the historian and the philosopher all treat solely of the works of Nature and the affairs of men ; but the poet, disdaining such limitations, 'borrows nothing of what is, hath been, or shall be'. What he does is either to transmute the real and actual, or else to attempt an entirely new creation. 'Lifted up', so declares Sidney, by the vigour of his own invention, he doth

grow in effect into another nature, in making things either better than Nature bringeth forth, or, quite anew forms such as were never in Nature. To Sidney : "Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done."

Kinds of Poetry

After having discussed the nature of poetry in general, Sidney then proceeds to analyse several kinds of poetry. There are three broad divisions of poetry. Sidney follows Scaliger and Minturno in classifying all poems into religious, philosophic, and poetic. Of religious poets the stock examples were said to be Orpheus and Amphion. To these he adds the more famous Biblical poets, David and Solomon, the writer of *Job*, Moses and Deborah in their *Hymns*, all of whom had 'imitated in inconceivable excellencies of God'. These poets have primarily a religious interest and hence could not be treated as purely poetical poems.

The second group of poets, namely the philosophical poets, include Tyrtaeus, Phocilides, Lucretius, Manilius, Lucan, and others. He commends them for their delightful teaching, but since they had treated of 'things as they were or are, Sidney is conscious of some inconsistency in his theorizing'.

The third group consists of poets who treat of life imaginatively. They could be termed as the right type of poets. Of this kind of poetry there are various sub-divisions or kinds—the heroic, lyric, tragic, comic, satiric, iambic, elegiac, pastoral, and others. This classification was in some measure unsound, being based partly on subject-matter, partly on metrical considerations. Sidney remarks : "These be they that, as the first and most noble sort may justly be termed 'vates'. They are poets or makers in the real sense. They imitate both to delight and teach, and delight to move men to take goodness in hand from which, without delight, they would fly as from something dangerous."

Defence of the Value of Poetry

All learning, says Sidney, is instrumental in lifting up the mind from the dungeon of the body to the enjoying of his own essence ; and not without its significance is his further definition of the effects of learning in general described in terms of mediaeval Scholastic psychology, as the 'enriching of memory (i.e. history) enabling (or strengthening of judgment (i.e. philosophy, and enlarging of conceit (i.e. poetry). The ultimate end of all learning, Sidney contends, is 'virtuous action' or the 'good life' ; and he recalls the saying of Aristotle that the fruit of learning is not mere knowing (gnosis) but doing (praxis). He further adds that the final test of value in connexion with the arts is not the conveying of knowledging, nor mere ethical teaching, but the imparting of an elevating

influence, an uplifting power which should inspire in men the desire of well being. He therefore concludes that poetry, no less than philosophy and history, can make claims of high cultural value.

Poetry Superior to All Sciences

Sidney next maintains that Poetry is superior to all sciences. Different sciences have different ends, but the chief end of all sciences alike is to promote knowledge. Poetry may be identified with the mistress-knowledge or *architektonike*, "the knowledge of man's self"—the supreme knowledge to which all others are subservient. Sidney states that of all the traditional branches of learning there are four more especially which seem to contribute to this mistress knowledge. They are theology, law, philosophy and history. Let us first see what he has to say about the relationship between poetry and philosophy and history.

Poetry, Philosophy and History

Sidney begins by saying that both philosophy and history play their parts in the teaching of virtue. "Philosophy, for instance, expounds its nature by means of analysis and definition, treating of its general categories and specific results, its private and public aspects thus providing precepts of general validity in their bearing on human conduct." The philosophers lay down general principles to make men virtuous. History on the other hand, is concerned with an 'active', rather than a 'theoretical', virtue ; it does not teach us by precept or abstract argument ; it is supposed to instruct us by particular examples drawn from life which illustrate in concrete fashion what virtue really is. Both methods however are not without their defects.

Moreover philosophy deals with abstraction ; is hard of utterance and misty to be conceived ; and hence is only a poor guide for youth and appeals only to those who are already learned. "History, again with its concrete examples, presents but a medley of empirical facts, from which general truths and the nature of virtue most especially but dimly and confusedly emerge." While the approach of philosophy is theoretical, the approach of history is pre-eminently practical.

Superiority of Poetry to Both

Poetry is superior to both philosophy and history because it combines the merits of both. It represents the universal truths bound up with philosophy. Poetry can combine precepts and examples. The "peerless poet" gives us a "perfect picture". He combines the functions of both, the philosopher and the historian, for he can image the abstract concept of philosophy in a concrete,

individual and human form to make it more attractive as well as effective. Sidney concludes thus :

> So he (the poet) coupleth the general notion with the particular example. A perfect picture, I say, for he yieldeth to the powers of the mind an image of that were of the philosopher bestoweth but a wordish description : which doth neither stroke, pierce or possess the sight of the soul as much as those illuminated or figured forth by the speaking pictures of poesy. This point is proved by a number of illustrations from Homer, Virgil, Chaucer and Sir Thomas More and its conclusion embraces the laudable practice of Christ himself...Certainly, our Saviour, Christ, could as well have given the moral commonplaces of uncharitableness and humbleness as the divine narration of *Dives* and *Lazarus* or of the disobedience and mercy, as that heavenly discourse of the Lost Child and gracious Father ; but that his thorough searching wisdom knew the state of Dives burning in hell, and of Lazarus being in Abraham's bosom, would more constantly inhabit the memory and judgement.

The Poet and the Philosopher

The poet is a greater teacher than the philosopher, because of his capacity for moving the reader, which is well nigh, the cause and the effect of teaching. Philosophy, he explains, scornful of pleasure, sternly abjures all emotional appeals ; whereas poetry attracts and holds the attention of all by its manifold delights. Plutarch describes poetry as 'a speaking picture', 'Poetry', says Sidney, 'was wont to array its teaching in the fairest, colours, resorting to the world of imagination 'from Dante's heaven to his Hell and by making the use of words, set in delightful proportion, often with the enchantment of music. Hence poetry, he maintains 'doth not only show the way, but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way as will entice any man to enter into it. The philosopher showeth the way, he informeth you of the particularities, as well as the tediousness of the way......Now therein of all sciences is our poet the monarch. For he doth not only show the way, but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way, as will entice any man to enter into it......he cometh to you, with words set in delightful proportions......".

Besides, the poet can make agreeable even those things which are repulsive in real life. "That imitation whereof poetry is, hath the most conveniency in nature of all other, in as that, as Aristotle saith, those things which in themselves are horrible, as cruel battles, unnatural monsters, are made in poetical imitation delightful."

This then, is the gist of Sidney's argument on behalf of poetry. With its lofty and effective teaching, its irresistible aesthetic charm, he claims for it no less than supremacy among the arts in virtue of its power of attuning the soul to high endeavour by means of glowing visions of the ideal.

Different Kinds of Poetry.

After having discussed the nature of poetry, Sidney proceeds to examine the several kinds of poetry with a view to defending them separately. His classification is more conventional than logical. Some poets combine two or three kinds, as tragedy and comedy and such a combination is called tragi-comedy. Some in the like manner have mingled prose and verse as Sannazzaro and Boethius. Some have mingled matters heroical and pastoral. But such combinations are not right. He therefore considers each part separately.

The Pastoral

The pastoral poetry as practised by Virgil and others can show the misery of the people, the blessedness of obscure life, and, at time, may include the whole considerations of wrong-doing and patience. Sometimes through the tales of wolves and sheep the poet considers the questions of right and wrong.

The Elegiac, The Iambic, and The Satiric

This is also true of Elegiac Poetry, Iambic Poetry (the older Greek satiric poetry written in iambic metre) and Satiric Poetry—all of which are wholesome. The Elegiac moves the heart with pity. It "moves rather pity than blame". It reveals "the weakness of mankind and the wretchedness of the world". It is then worthy of being cultivated. The iambic is "bitter but wholsome" because it puts to "shame the trumpet of villainy with bold and open crying out against naughtiness". The Satiric poem ridicules and by ridicules makes a man laugh at folly. By laughing at folly, one feels "ashamed to laugh at himself". All these forms have a moral purpose, and largely contribute to the general good of the people.

The Lyric

Except for the lyric "Other sorts of poetry almost have we none". Even in lyric poetry the contemporary themes are not adequately and usefully handled. There is however a genuine lyrical fire in the Biblical *Psalms and Songs* where we come across "that unspeakable and everlasting beauty to be seen by the eyes of the mind, only cleared by faith". Sidney declares that contemporary love lyric is "insincere and devoid of passion". Though filled with

borrowed high sounding phrases—lacking both force and feeling, it has to be admitted that it is the love lyric which "gives moral precepts and natural problems", and which sometimes raises up the voice to the height of the heavens. Sidney ironically says that perhaps he would be considered an uncultured person that the old song of Percy and Douglas i.e. the ballad of *Chevy Chase* moves his heart more than any trumpet; "yet is sung but by some blind crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style; which being so evil apparelled in the dust and cobwebs of that uncivil age, what would it work, trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar ?"

The Comic

Another kind of poetry is comedy. Comedy is an imitation of the common errors of our life. These errors are represented here "in the most ridiculous and scornful manner". The result is that no spectator would ever wish to have those follies or commit those errors. In other words it is held to be effective in warning men against indulgence in such foibles. There may be some who often brand it as 'naughty or wicked'. But if properly examined, comedy reveals that it "holds a mirror upto us, and it is indeed good for us to see ourselves reflected as we really are. It may, of course, be abused but that is a different matter altogether. There seems nothing blame-worthy about it as such."

Tragedy

As regards the tragedy, it opens the greatest wounds and shows forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue. Tragedy makes kings fear to be tyrants and tyrants are made to reveal their full tyranny in their actions. "They also manifest their tyrannical humours; that with stirring the affects of admiration and commiserations, teacheth the uncertainty of this world, and upon weak foundations gilded roofs are builded." Tragedy, with its 'sweet violence' reveals wickedness in high places, is said to bring home to men the uncertainty of life.

The Heroic or Epic

And lastly, we have the epic or heroic poetry, significantly described as the best and most accomplished kind of poetry: in which form, Sidney asserts, heroic and moral goodness are most effectively portrayed. It portrays the life and actions of such heroes as Achilles, Cyrus, Aeneas, Turnus, Tydeus and Rinaldo. It is both instructive and delightful.

Conclusion

These are thus the different kinds of poetry. Whatever the kind of poetry, it provides us illumination and guidance. And as far the snarling critics, "the poet-whippers", adds Sidney, they may

find fault with poetry but they cannot say where the actual fault lies.

Poetry : The Highest Kind of Learning

Sidney concludes eloquently : "Since then poetry is of all human learning the most ancient and of most fatherly antiquity, as from whence other learnings have taken their beginnings ; since it is so universal that no learned nation doth despise it, nor no barbarous nation is without it ; since both Roman and Greek gave divine names unto it, the one of prophesying, the other of 'making', and that indeed that name of 'making' is fit for him, considering that whereas other arts retain themselves within their subject, and receive, as it were, their being from it, the poet only bringeth his own stuff and doth not learn a conceit out of a matter, but maketh matter out of a conceit...." The effects of poetry are so good as to teach goodness and to delight the learners. In moral doctrine also the poet surpasses the historian as well as the philosophers. In *The Holy Scripture* in which there is nothing evil Christ himself used poetical language. On the whole, adds Sidney, "the laurel Crown, appointed for triumphing captains doth worthily honour the poet's triumph."

Objections Against Poetry

In the next section, Sidney now turns to consider the objections that were being raised by contemporary Philistines, captious and trifling though these objections were.

Rhyming and Versing

The first charge is concerned with the rhyming and versing which is associated with poetry. (Of course, there are a number of idle fault-finders who will connect the verb before they understand the noun). Sidney first replies to the general complaint that poetry was bound up with "rhyming and versing". Sidney's simple and straight-forward reply is that verse is not at all essential poetry. He finds no essential connection between the two. One may be a poet without poetry. But even if we agree with Scaliger in regarding verse as an inseparable component of poetry, we have little ground to condemn poetry for it. If speech is one of the greatest natural gifts bestowed on man, verse which polishes and sweetens it, must be an object of praise. It requires a patient weighing of words and their proper combinations to produce the enchantment of harmony. Above all it is an aid to memory which is the treasurer of knowledge. "So that verse being in itself sweet and orderly, and being best for memory, the only handle of knowledge, it must be in jest that any man can speak against it."

Four Main Charges Against Poetry

The four main charges enumerated against poetry by Sidney are as follows :

(a) First that poetry was useless and a waste of time ;

(b) That poetry was 'the mother of lies', a collection of falsehoods ;

(c) That it gave rise to evil fancies and had thus a degrading and enfeebling influence ; and lastly,

(d) That there was a tradition that Plato had banished poets from his ideal state.

Sidney's Defence

Sidney gallantly defends poetry against the first charge, claiming to have already refuted it in establishing the fact that poetry stood supreme in conducing to virtue. Quoting his own words he states that "no learning is so good as that which teacheth and moveth to virtue, and that none can both teach and move thereto so much as poetry, then is the conclusion manifest that ink and paper cannot to a more profitable purpose be employed." In other words, the study of poetry is most profitable, for it imparts delightful instruction and so moves man to virtuous action.

As regards the second charge that poetry deals with things untrue Sidney stoutly denies. Astronomers, physicians historians and others, all these, he concedes, inevitably make false statements. But the poet nothing affirms and therefore never lieth ; his aim being to tell what is or is not, but what should or should not be'. So that what he offers is not fact but fiction ; yet fiction embodying truth of an ideal kind. Who is there so foolish so to mistake the poets' "local habitation and a name" for reality ?

As regards the third charge that poetry is immoral—the nurse of abuse, that it corrupts men and has an effeminizing effect on the readers, Sidney replies that poets 'have been companions to camps' since times immemorial. The detractors say that the different kinds of poetry such as comedies, lyrics, elegies, and heroic poems are, all alike, infected with the love theme and its amorous conceits, thus filling the minds of men with 'pestilent desires'. For the sake of argument Sidney is prepared to grant that a vicious treatment of love had not been altogether absent from earlier poetry ; though at the same time he protested that the love theme in itself did not deserve outright condemnation. Was not the gift of discerning beauty a noble attribute of mankind ? Yet, granted that such abuse really existed, it was wrong to conclude that the fault

was inherent in poetry itself; it was mainly due to man's misuse of the same. If not properly used, all the arts and sciences had evil effects; but that did not detract from their value. So was also the case with poetry.

Finally, Sidney replies to the last charge, namely, Plato's rejection of poetry as it fosters in men an indulgence in fancy, and making them disinclined to action. Sidney is at a loss to understand how Plato who was the "most poetical philosopher" could "defile the fountain out of which his flowing streams have flowed. He reminds his readers, to begin with, of the ancient conflict between philosophy and poetry which had raged for two centuries before Plato's time. It was again the philosophers who had extracted their wisdom from 'the mysteries of poetry'. Sidney also maintains that Plato, although a philosopher, was not an enemy of poetry. On the contrary, Plato's objections were actually levelled against the wrong opinions of the gods and atheism and current theological doctrines. In other words, Plato in his view had banished the abuse of poetry and not poetry itself. Then again Plato himself revealed the divine origin of the poet's inspiration when he characterised the poet in *Ion* as "a light and winged and holy thing". Plato, he confesses, was making a claim which he, for his part could not endorse. Let us therefore look upon Plato as our patron and not our adversary.

Next we shall discuss Sidney's view of contemporary tragedy and tragi-comedy and the importance of the Unities. Now we come to the last section of the *Defence* in which Sidney makes a review of English poetry from Chaucer onwards, and asserts that from the earliest times poetry had been honoured at all times in all climes. Alexander, Caesar, Scipios, David, Adrian, Sophocles and Germanicus, not only favoured poets but wished to be poets themselves. Even the Greek philosopher Socrates devoted a greater part of his old age in putting Aesop's Fables into verse. Plato's dialogues are all poetic. Plutarch too discoursed on the advantages of poetry and considered it as a fit subject for serious study.

Poet as Maker

In reviewing the state of poetry in England Sidney regrets why England had always been as a stepmother to poets, who surpass all others in wit, and who have been ranked with mountebanks. Poets are born rather than made. Poets are makers of themselves; they do not learn or take from others. "Poesy must not be drawn by the ears; it must be gently led, or rather it must lead." Poesy has always been favoured by Kings, Emperors, Senators and Captains. Robert King of Sicily, the great King Francis of France, King James of Scotland were all poets and patrons of poetry. Great Cardinals, as Bembus and Bibbiena; such famous preachers and teachers as Beza and Melancthon; learned philosophers as

Fracastorius and Scaliger ; orators like Pontanus and Muretus ; so piercing wits as George Buchanan, grave counsellors and many others—all these not only read other's poesies but also tried to poetise for other's reading. So before drawing to a close Sidney cannot help asking how it was that the prevailing contempt for poetry had come about. It was rather surprising that when poets flourished in England in wartime they did not flourish in times of peace.

English Poets Lack Inspiration

Sidney regrets that only a few poems had been produced in England since Chaucer's day. Unfortunately the peaceful years between 1558-81 had in reality bred but a tame and sluggish generation ; the poets of this period lacked the ardent and generous spirit necessary for poetic creation ; so that poetry had fallen into the hands who were worldly in spirit and uninspired. Sidney characterises them as 'bastard poets', poets who wrote in ignorance of poetic art, to the great hurt of poetry. They have neither skill nor learning ; whereas the true exponents of poetry should be gifted men who must seek to know what they do and how to do it. For the attainment of such skill Sidney suggests the old classical prescription of the rhetoricians to be still valid, namely, a knowledge of art (*ars*), imitation of sound models (*imitatio*), and a constant practice (*exercitatio*). But except for practice, and that of a misguided kind, such precepts, he contended were everywhere neglected. If therefore the state of poetry was in a pitiful condition, it was so not only because of contemporary activities of inferior and mercenary minds, but also because of the widespread ignorance of poetic art.

In Praise of English Poets

In spite of the deplorable state of poetry in England, there are a few poets, says Sidney, who have produced a few good poems in England. For example Chaucer's *Troylus and Cresseid* is a praiseworthy piece. Paying his tribute to Chaucer, Sidney observes : "Of whom, truly I know not whether to marvel more, either that he is in that misty time could see so clearly, or that we in this clear age walk so slumbringly after him." He is all praise for Sackville whose *Mirror of Magistrates* is properly furnisned with beautiful parts. In the *Lyrics* of Earl of Surrey, he finds many noble poems and Spenser's *Shepherd's Calendar* contains much good poetry in its *Dialogues*.

Contemporary Comedies and Tragedies : Their Faults

Next Sidney turns his critical wrath on the contemporary tragedy and comedy. His conception of tragedy is based on the medieval tradition that tragedy treats mainly of the falls of tyrants and the uncertainty of life. Following Scaliger, for instance, he

maintains the necessity for stately speeches and moral teaching after the manner of Seneca. As regards, the function of tragedy, he adopts Minturno's terms, admiration and commiseration in place of 'pity and fear'.

As regards the defects of the English tragic and comic plays Sidney comments they observe rules neither of civility nor of poetry. In his own words : "A tragedy is tried to the laws of poesy, and not of history ; not bound to follow the story, but having liberty either to feign a quite new matter, or to frame the history to the most tragical conveniency."

Two Defects of Contemporary Drama

Sidney points out the two serious defects of contemporary drama, namely, the gross improbabilities caused by the neglect of the unities of time and place, and the incongruous mingling of comic with tragic material. The first of these matters he treats at some length, claiming the support of Aristotle and 'common reason', asserting also that the unities had been observed in antiquity, though Plautus and Terence had occasionally had lapses. What seems most absurd to Sidney is the practice of mixing tragic and comic elements. It is stupid to mingle kings and clowns or to match horn-pipes and funerals. Sidney calls it as a "mongrel tragi-comedy".

Conclusion

Sidney is thus highly critical of the English tragic playwrights for not observing the unity of time. How much absurd that stage must be deemed to be when it represents now Asia, now Africa, now a garden, a rock, a cave, a battle-field ; or again, that in two short hours, the ups and downs of a whole life-story could be fitly unfolded. Even *Gorboduc*, which is full of stately speeches and well-sounding phrases, climbing to the height of Seneca's style, and as full of notable morality, which it doth so delightfully teach, is grievously defective in the breach of the unities of time and place. But if it is so in *Gorboduc*, how much more in all the rest, where you shall have Asia of the one side, and Africa of the other, and so many other kingdoms, that the player when he cometh in, must ever begin with telling who he is or else the tale will not be conceived ?

Views on Comedy

Concerning his views on comedy, Sidney's chief complaint is the prevailing tendency to make comedy little more than rough farce productive of empty and fleeting laughter, while his desire is for a more intellectual comedy resulting in delight of a satisfying and lasting kind. "Comedy", he says, "is an imitation of the common errors of life." These errors are represented here in the most ridiculous and scornful manner. Comedy has become, says Sidney, almost a crude force which seeks to provoke empty laughter. He

draws a distinction between laughter and delight. His contemporaries thought erroneously that there can be no delight without laughter. It is definitely a wrong idea, "for though laughter may come with delight, yet cometh it not out of delight, as though delight would be the cause of laughter ; but well may one thing breed both together ; rather in themselves, they have, as it were, a kind of contraiety ; for delight we scarcely do but in things that have a conveniency to ourselves or to the general nature ; laughter almost ever cometh of things most disproportioned to ourselves and nature. Delight hath a joy in it, either permanent or present. Laughter hath only a scornful tickling. It is momentary and it emerges from an incongruity or disproportion, between those subjects, and men and Nature.

Delight and Laughter

Then again, he says, that there can be delight without laughter and 'laughter without delight, as in the results produced by grotesque forms, the mad capers of 'antics' or buffoons, or sudden and unexpected mischances. At the same time he holds that 'delight' and 'laughter' could be effectively combined ; and this combination he regards as productive of comedy in the true sense. As an instance of what he has in mind he recalls the situation of Hercules as described by Ovid 'with his great beard and furious countenance in woman's attire, spinning at Omphates commandment. Here, he points out, over and above the 'laughter' caused by an amazing, and outrageous spectacle is also the 'delight' arising from a realization of the vagaries of love ; and in such a situation, he suggests, are to be found the ingredients of genuine comedy, and 'that delightful teaching which is the end of poesy'.

Having thus argued in favour of a more intellectual kind, Sidney then proceeds to supply practical hints calculated to make such comedy effective :

> In the first place, following Aristotle, Sidney points out that comedy has nothing to do with things evil or vicious. Such themes or characters merely excite aversion and call for stern treatment.
>
> Secondly, painful human deformities cannot be treated as comic material, as such deformities are hateful to the sight and give rise to pity rather than amusement.
>
> Thirdly, the proper material for comedy is to be found in human weaknesses and foibles of a harmless kind. Such characters we may find in a fussy courtier, a braggart soldier. a conceited fellow, and an affected traveller. In suggesting such characters however Sidney is not proposing to limit comedy to the use of those or any other stereotvoed figures or types. But such characters are likely to give rise to 'delightful laughter'. Such characters, he declares, are those 'which we play naturally'. In other words. they are characters actually drawn from the ordinary life of the time.

Contemporary Lyric

Sidney's next subject of study is the contemporary lyric. He is drawn to the lyrical poetry because "Other sorts of poetry almost have we none." He chiefly complains of the futility of the themes of contemporary efforts and therefore inadequate to inspire true lyrical qualities. Those qualities he finds in Biblical poetry, particularly in the *Psalms* of which he himself had produced a metrical version. In his own words, he states : "How well it might be employed and with how heavenly fruit both private and public, in singing the praises of the immortal beauty, and the immortal goodness of that God who giveth us hands to write and wits to conceive."

Of the love poetry of the time, and such contemporary verse as came under the banner of unresistible love, he speaks with disapproval, censuring its insincerity and lack of passion. Most of these poems lack genuine force and feeling. As regards the sonnets of the 16th century, he regrets the fact that poor Petrarch's long deceased woes were still being sung "with new-born sighs and denizened wit". Finally, he recognizes for the first time the element of personal feeling bound up with the lyric in the advice of his Muse to "look in thy heart and write".

Diction and Style

The next subject on which Sidney dilates is the diction and style of the poets of his age. Here again he condemns outright the "courtesan-like painted affectation" pervading the writings all around. The diction of the English poets is extremely affected. The contemporary writers had a craze for 'fine writing', in other words they were crazy after the use of far-fetched ink-horn terms, obscure and grandiose, as well as devices such as alliteration and other hackneyed figures. Affectation of style was not confined to poetry alone ; it coloured ordinary prose, even the prose of scholarly men, 'while they also formed part of pulpit oratory'. Sidney laments that these "rhetorical devices were used without discretion, in season and out of season, so that 'sugar and spice were cast upon every dish' ; and this 'seeming fineness', this tawdry eloquence, failed completely in its true function, which was that of persuasion."

Use of Similes

Among other defects Sidney notes one in particular, namely, the inordinate use of similes drawn from unnatural history. This use of similes had already become a fashion, as was seen, for instance, in Lyly's *Euphues* (1578) and Gosson's *The Schoole of Abuse* (1579). This craze for Euphuism he strongly denounces both here and elsewhere, as when, for example, he derides those poets who

> With strange similes enriched each line,
> Of herbs and beasts, which Ind or Afric hold.
>
> (*Astrophel and Stella*)

Similes, he points out, contributed not at all to the task of persuasion ; they proved nothing, but only illustrated ; and illustration overdone was both tedious and distracting. "To win credit of popular ears", he urged, "plain sensibleness alone was necessary". He also adds that he found in "diverse small learned courtiers" a sounder and more effective style "than in some professors of learning". He concludes by saying that "we must bend to the right use both of matter and manner".

The English Language

The English language has immense advantages to offer to the poets by its complexity and by its freedom. That it was a language with many foreign elements but without inflexions, was no doubt true ; but these features, he maintained, only added to its wealth and ease of expressions. It was indeed a great language in its faculty of forming compounds. It rivalled Greek and surpassed Latin. "The truth was", added Sidney, "that for the uttering sweetly and properly the conceits of the mind......English hath equally with any other tongue in the world."

English Prosody

The last matter treated by Sidney in this famous treatise was the question relating to the possibility of reforming prosody along classical lines. "Now of versifying there are two sorts, the one ancient, the other modern ; the ancient marked the quantity of each syllable and according to that framed his verse ; the modern observing only number, with some regard of the accent, the chief life of it standeth in that like sounding of the words, which we call rhyme." Sidney further observes that the ancient versification is more fit for music ; but the modern with its rhyme also strikes a certain music to that ear. In this respect English is the best of the modern European languages and it is fit for both the systems of versification—the classical as well as the modern.

Conclusion

Sidney concludes his treatise in praise of poetry. Being full of delightfulness, poetry is conducive to virtue. The blames laid against it are either false or feeble. Why it is not esteemed in England is not the fault of poets but poet-apes. The English tongue is most fit to honour poetry and to be honoured by poetry. Aristotle described the poets as "the ancient treasures of Grecian's Divinity". Scaliger said that poets can make you honest sooner than the philosophers ; and according to Landino the poets are so beloved of the gods that "whatever they write proceeds of a divine fury".

6

"The Apology" as an Epitome of Renaissance Criticism Or A Critique of "The Apology"

A Significant Critical Tract

The importance of "An Apology for Poetry" both symptomatically and typically can hardly be exaggerated. It exhibits the temper of the generation which actually produced the first fruits of the greatest Elizabethan poetry. It served as a stimulant and encouragement to all the successive generations of the great age. William K. Wimsatt and Cleanth Brooks have observed :

> The *Defence of Poesie* by Sir Philip Sidney is both the English locus of closest contact with Italian criticism and a brilliant epitome of what was best in the spirit of that criticism. The utilitarian defence of poetry by an Englishman appears quite early in the century with Sir Thomas Elyot's *Booke of the Governour*, 1530, in which Chapters X and XII of Book I (the education of a public servant described by a public servant) maintain that Homer and Virgil can teach the young men not only moral lessons but arms, politics, and horse-breeding. (The pre-Platonic directness of this apology—as if the rhapsode Ion were speaking—was perhaps possible only because it came before the great vogue of Aristotle's *Poetics*.) A less pragmatic idea about the civilizing value of literature was one of the basic premises of Renaissance Humanism and of the Renaissance theory of education—in the *Adagia* of Erasmus for instance, or the treatises of Ludovicus Vives. Throughout Italian criticism of the century (in Trissino, Minturno, Cinthino, Mazzoni, for instance, and in almost all other writers) the accepted formula is morally didactic, the Horatio-Aristotelian instruction and pleasure, with countless inconclusive variations on the relation between the two.

It (*The Apology*) is a kind of formal beginning of literary theorizing by the English man of letters, and a brilliant enough one—written in the high enthusiastic, occasionally a-syntactic style of the gifted amateur champion, headlong to outdazzle the lowness and myopia of professional moral grumblers. The essay reflects and telescopes not only the continental criticism of the century but a certain amount of classical Greek and Roman as well. Passages have been assigned to Minturno, Scaliger and Castelvetro. And latterly the original sources of neo-classic criticism and anti-criticism, Aristotle's *Poetics* and Plato's *Republic*, Book X perhaps in Latin translations such as Pazzi's of Aristotle and Ficino's of Plato have been urged as the true fountains of Sidney's learning. It is certain that he read little Greek, and it appears likely to us that he was better acquainted with contemporary interpretations of classical criticism than with the latter itself. But it all matters little. Sidney wrote, not a pedant's encyclopedia, but a gentleman's essay.

Philosophy and Poetry

Sidney's work is confined to what we may call the 'philosophy of Poetry', that is, such general problems as, the nature of poetry, its main kinds and its peculiar function in relation to the actual life of society. It brings out his exalted conception of the nature and function of poetry. In the words of Spingarn :

> In all that relates to the antiquity, universality, and pre-eminence of poetry, Sidney apparently follows Minturno. Poetry as the first law-giver to ignorance, flourished before any other art or science. The first philosophers and historians were poets ; and such supreme works as the *Psalms* of David and the Dialogues of Plato are in reality, poetical ; and among the Greeks as a maker ; and no nation, however primitive or barbarous has been without poets, or has failed to receive delight and instruction from poetry.

A Well-Devised Scheme

To begin with one of the most admirable features of Sidney's "Apology" is its general planning and the well devised scheme with which the main argument unfolds itself. J. W. H. Atkins observes :

> Himself a poet, courtier and a scholar, imbued with much that was best in classical and Italian thought, he yet carries his learning lightly, fuses it in some sort of unity ; and the result is a surprising performance for a youngman of twenty-seven or there-abouts, a work unique in contemporary literature, and one rare at anytime, with its wide scholarship, its good sense, and its enduring charm.

> First comes a section in which conventional reasons are given why poetry should be specially valued ; and this is followed by arguments of a more 'palpable' or convincing kind, based upon an exposition of the nature and usefulness of poetry itself. After thus fortifying the reader with positive ideas on the subject, Sidney then proceeds to discuss the current objections to poetry ; and the work is brought to a close with remarks on the state of English poetry in Sidney's own day. These then are the four main divisions of the *Apology* : though at no stage does the work assume the severity of a formal or impersonal treatise Writing as he does for courtly circles, Sidney from first to last discards the role of schoolmaster and adopts the method formerly advocated by Vives, of writing on learned matters 'spontaneously and clearly'...so that knowledge might be gained with a certain delight. Thus he winds his way into his subject with an amusing ironical prologue, takes farewell of the reader in the same ironical vein ; and over every page there lingers the spell of a humane and gracious personality.

Nature and Function of Poetry

To start with Sidney makes, for the first time, significant pronouncements on the nature and function of poetry. "Poetry", says Sidney, "is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth, to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture, with this end to teach and delight." In this way, Sidney is able to preserve the aesthetic side of poetry, while his whole weight falls on its primary function, i.e. to communicate truth and knowledge in a lively form to attract the readers or to induce them to imitate the forms of virtue feigned by him. It is also interesting to recall in this connection Sidney's attitude towards Aristotelian conception of *Mimesis*. In some passages he seems to adhere to it, while in others he implies the creative independence of the poet and shifts the function of imitation to the readers.

Poetic Inspiration

Not the least important is Sidney's emphatic statement that poetry was ultimately the fruit of inspiration, and thus 'a divine gift'. On this J. W. H. Atkins comments :

> There seems at first sight some inconsistency in his remarks on the subject. Thus in more than one place he affirms the working of 'a divine breath' ; whereas elsewhere he finds himself unable to follow Plato in making

> a similar claim, definitely stating that 'Plato attributeth unto poetry more than myself do, namely, to be a very inspiring of a divine force'. It may be that he discriminates between Plato's description of the process as the external working of a Pagan Muse on man deprived of reason and the influence of God raising to a higher power the inborn faculties of man ; and not without significance is the fact that he nowhere discusses the actual nature of this divine influence.

Whatever the shortcomings, the fact that poetry is a product of divine inspiration, and that it is truly divine, as stated by Sidney cannot be challenged. In this light poetry becomes the most valuable of all human activities. Nature's world is brazen, the poets only deliver it golden.

Kinds of Poetry

After this general discussion on the essential nature of poetry, Sidney turns to examine several kinds of poetry with a view to defending them separately. It should be mentioned here that his classification is less logical than conventional. He adopts the traditional classification with some modification and follows it after Scaliger and Minturno. According to them the main classes of poetry were three—(1) religious, (2) philosophical, and (3) poetry which consisted of an imaginary treatment of human life. Religious poets, such as Orpheus and Amphion, David and Solomon, Moses and Deborah had 'imitated the inconceivable excellencies of God'. The second category of poets, namely the philosophical poets included Tyrtaeus, Phocilides, Lucretius, Manilius, Lucan and others and, though they were commendable for their delightful teaching, suffered from some inconsistency in their teaching. Sidney adds an ironic comment : "Whether they properly be poets or no, let grammarians dispute." It is to the third category of poets however that Sidney pays special attention. And of these he states that there are various sub-divisions or 'kinds'—the heroic, lyric, tragic, comic, satiric, iambic, elegiac, pastoral and others. Commenting on this classification, a critic observes :

> This conventional classification, as Sidney himself points out, was in some measure unsound, being based partly on subject-matter, partly on metrical considerations. Yet it was a timely reminder of poetic forms other than epigrams, epithalamia, figure-poems and the like, which mainly engaged the attention of his contemporaries ; it was also an indication of the possibilities of poetry conceived on the lines of classical antiquity.

The Main Burden of the Treatise

Next Sidney proceeds to discuss the main issue of his treatise, namely, his defence of the value of poetry in the intellectual life of the community. Sidney's chief concern in his work is the defence of poetry in a manner answerable to the peculiar approach of the Puritan critic ; the poet images forth the great human virtues and attributes in an alluring manner in order that the readers may be induced to imitate them in their practical life by modelling their actual behaviours on those noble patterns. Thus he gives a personal twist to the dictum of Horace that the poet, either teaches or combines both the functions. Sidney clearly emphasizes the moral aspect of poetry when he says that "poets, indeed, do merely make to imitate, and imitate both to delight and teach, and delight to move men to take that goodness in hand which without delight they would fly as from a stranger."

Poetic Justice

As the argument advances along this didactic line, Sidney adds further weight to it by invoking the aid of 'Poetic Justice'. The poet does not rest content with the presentation of virtues in lovely colours, but he places 'side by side' the various vices in such ugly and monstrous forms as to frighten the reader from them. Besides this. in the poetic world the virtuous are ultimately rewarded and the virtuous have to eat the fruits of their sin in sorrow and suffering, with the final wreck of all their designs. After clinching his argument, in this way, in favour of the moral improvement which the poet is capable of effecting. Sidney takes another step forward by seeking to prove that a poet is a better and more effective teacher than either the philosopher or the Historian or other accredited apostles of truth and morality. It is in this passage that he gives the best evidence of his ironical humour, as is apparent in the portraits of the Philosopher and the Historian. When he declares that poetry is superior to history, as poetry is more philosophical than history, Sidney displays a clear realization of the nature of imaginative truth, as distinct from historical truth. "Here", says F. S. Boas, "he proves himself in a fuller degree than any previous Englishman to be an understanding disciple of Aristotle." Poetry is concerned with, as Aristotle put it, *Katholou* (the universal consideration) while it is concerned with *Kathekaston* (the particular). Thus for Aristotle : Which reason of his (as all his) is most full of reason." Rarely has greater honour been bestowed on the ancient Greek critic, regarded by Dante as "the master of all who know".

Sidney's Reputation

The next section of "The Apology" deals with the four main objections raised against poetry by the "poet-haters". They are : (1) Poetry is useless—a waste of time. (2) Poetry is the mother of

lies. (3) Poetry is immoral—the nurse of abuse, and (4) Plato who thought of poets as great cheats banished them from his ideal state.

Commenting on Sidney's Defence of Poetry against these charges, Wimsatt and Brooks maintain that Sidney's reply is a counter-blast to the "Puritan-Platonic impeachment of poetry". As a matter-of-fact Sidney replies to those critics who condemn poetry as mere versing and rhyming. The essence of poetry lies in feigning or "imaginative creation", and not in rhyme or metre. "It is not rhyming or versing that maketh a poet, no more than a long gown maketh an advocate. Verse is only an ornament and no cause to poetry."

Atkin's View

That Sidney gives 'a crushing and dignified reply' to the objections of the objectors cannot be denied. In his replies he also flashes new light over the whole field dispelling the mists which had gathered around poetry during the preceding centuries. J. W. H. Atkins has offered a very pertinent comment in this connection :

> ......and in addition he (Sidney) restored poetry once again to its place of honour among the great arts and claimed it as a serious and fruitful study for modern readers. Nor is his handling of this his main theme unworthy of the occasion. To it he has devoted the main part of his work, bringing to bear the results of wide and judicious reading, and fusing together ideas drawn from various quarters, from Plato and Aristotle chiefly, but from Horace, Cicero and Plutarch, from patriotic writings, from Italian and other sources as well.
>
> Yet more notable, however, is the skill with which he has made his philosophical disquisition easy and attractive reading for courtly circles. To this end his liberal use of illustrations drawn from ancient and Biblical literature from medieval romances and ballads alike, in some measure contributed. But more effective still is his concrete and picturesque treatment of an abstract theme, the humorous irony in which he has veiled his lively portraits of the philosopher and the historian and the charming simplicity of his account of the poet and his work.

It is, however, to the last of the objections—Plato's rejection of poetry—that Sidney finds the greatest difficulty in replying. Sidney does not lend credence to the view that the great philosopher was an enemy of poetry. He believes that Plato's dialogues are in reality themselves a form of poetry ; it is sheer ingratitude that the greatest

of the 'most poetical' of philosophers should 'defile the fountain out of which his flowing streams had proceeded'. "Yet though Sidney perceives how fundamental are Plato's objections to poetry, he is inclined to believe that it was rather against the abuse of poetry by the contemporary Greek poets that Plato was chiefly cavailling; for poets are praised by the *Ion*, and the greater men of every age have been patrons and lovers of poetry" (Spingarn).

In his inimitable style Sidney therefore concludes that poetry is not an art of lies, but of true doctrine; not of effeminateness, but of notable steering of courage; not of abusing man's wit, but of strengthening man's wit; not banished but honoured by Plato.

Superiority of the Poet

The most important section and at the same time the most commendable part of *The Apology* is the one where Sidney upholds the role of the poet and his superiority to the historian and the philosopher. "The poet", says he, "is a greater teacher than the philosopher because of his capacity for moving the reader, which is well nigh the cause and the effect of his teaching." The 'peerless poet' has a power to combine the functions of both, the philosopher and the historian, for he can image the abstract concept of philosophy in a concrete individual and human form to make it more attractive as well effective. "So he (the poet) coupleth the general notion with the particular example. A perfect picture, I say for he yieldeth to the powers of the mind an image of that whereof the philosopher bestoweth but a wordish description which doth neither stroke, pierce or possess the sight of the soul as much as those illuminated or figured forth by the speaking pictures of poesy." This point is further enforced with a number of illustrations from Homer, Virgil, Chaucer, and Sir Thomas More, and its conclusion embraces the laudable practice of Christ himself. "Certainly our Saviour Christ, could as well have given the moral commonplaces of uncharitableness and humbleness as the divine naration of *Dives* and *Lazarus* or of the disobedience and mercy, as that heavenly discourse of the Lost Child and gracious Father; but that his thorough-searching wisdom knew the state of Dives burning in hell, and of Lazarus being in Abraham's bosom, would more constantly inhabit the memory and judgement."

Its Minor Shortcomings

Inspite of the symptomatic and typical importance of Sidney's manifesto we cannot deny the fact that Sidney's treatise suffers from some minor shortcomings. That he makes mistakes both in gross and detail—that he even makes some serious mistakes from the mere "point of view of the examiner"—is of course undeniable. Prof. Saintsbury has rightly pointed out that "he has a good deal of the

merely traditional mode of Renaissance respect for classical—and for some modern authority. That, for instance, there is a good deal to be said, and that not only from the point of view of Ben Jonson, against Spenser's half-archaic, half-rustic dialect in the *Calender*, few would refuse to grant. But Theocritus did use dialect : it would in the least matter whether either he or Virgil did not ; and if it did, what has the modern and purely vernacular name of Sannazar to do with the matter? It can be only replied that Spenser, by permitting "E. K.'s" annotation, did much to invite this sort of criticism ; and that Englishman's reluctance to rely on the inherent powers of the English language was purely justified for hardly any dead poet but Chaucer and no dead prose writers but Malory and perhaps Berners deserved the title of "great", partly came from very pardonable ignorance."

It has been already observed that Sidney is by no means preemptory about the "new versifying", and in particular has absolutely none of the craze against rhyme as rhyme which animated persons of every degree of ability, from Stanyburst to Milton, during more than a century. His remarks on versification are, owever, too scanty to need much comment.

Sidney's Attitude to Contemporary English Drama

After his strong defence of poetry Sidney proceeds to examine the degradation of contemporary English drama, the true nature of Tragedy and Comedy and the importance of the unities. It is rather unfortunate that Sidney dilates more on the defects of English drama than its merits. He has a very low opinion of the English plays which seem to him absolutely wretched. In his criticism of the contemporary drama Sidney appears as a typical classicist ; judging the merits and demerits of works, severally or in a lump, in the light of the precepts and rules evolved by the Italian critics of the age out of the writings of Aristotle and Horace. "It is amusing to reflect", says Hallam, "that this contemptuous reprehension of the English theatre (and he had spoken in as disparaging terms of our general poetry) came from the pen of Sidney, when Shakespeare had just arrived at manhood. Had he not been so prematurely cut off, what would have been the transports of that noble spirit, which the ballad of *Chevy Chase* could stir as with the sound of a trumpet in reading the *Faery Queen* or *Othello*."

Sidney's Two Charges

By and large Sidney levels two charges against contemporary tragedy. In the first place, the English tragedy is full of improbabilities which were the result of the violation of the unities of time and place. How much improbable and inartistic, says Sidney, is it to make the same stage appear as Asia, Africa, garden, cave, rock and battlefield. Equally fallacious is the attempt of the

dramatists to represent an entire life-history in two hours and a half.

Secondly, Sidney is highly critical of the practice of the English dramatists for their mixing up of the tragic and the comic elements. He calls tragi-comedy a mongrel form. Clowns are thrust in by head and shoulders to play a part in majestic matters with neither decency nor discretion. The ancients never sought to watch hornpipes with funerals. Sidney is therefore very unhappy that tragedy is not always maintained in a well-raised admiration and comedy, the proper end of which is delightful teaching, often degenerates in England into something farcical and immoral.

A Balanced Judgement

Commenting on Sidney's condemnatory remarks on the contemporary English drama a distinguished critic comments :

> Sidney's criticism is a fine and faithful representation of the conditions of popular Elizabethan stage, confirmed as it is not only by the specimens of tragedies and comedies which have come down to us, but also by the constant reiterations of similar charges by critics who flourished in the following decades. We shall however. linger a moment over the criticism of the English tragi-comedies, which freely and indiscriminately mingled together laughter and tears. Sidney is not opposed to such a mixture provided it is done judiciously, which was not the case with the plays known to him. His estimate of their crudity and absurdity is quite correct and just.
>
> Sidney, however would certainly have modified his indictment had he been destined to a longer term of life and seen the superb skill of Shakespeare in converting the episodes of lowest comedy and horse-play into an effective instrument for the intensification of the tragic effect. In Macbeth and King Lear Shakespeare has imaged forth the essential union of Tragedy and Comedy. In this way Sidney's criticism, pertinent though it is in relation to the current practice of his period, should never be accepted. and it was never meant to be accepted, as a principal of universal validity or application.

English Lyrics and the Poetic Diction

Finally, Sidney lashes at the lyricists and sonnet writers of the Elizabethan Age. He remarks that they lack sincerity, 'so coldly they apply fiery speeches'. But the outside of it, that is, Diction, is even worse. "So is that honey-flowing matron, Eloquence apparelled,

or rather disguised, in a courtesan like painted affectation : One time with far-fetched words ; another time with coursing of a letter ; another time with figures and flowers extremely winter-starved. This fault is not limited to versifiers, but prose writers also. Thus the diction of the English poets is extremely affected, and their affectation, alliterations and Euphuistic prose style and such other tricks can only spoil everything. But Sidney is all praise for the glorious possibilities of the English language, which, he states, is fit for both the systems of versification—the classical as well as the modern. His judgment which is one of compromise, is notable, however, for its methods of approach.

Conclusion

These then are the main contents of Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry*. It is really an outstanding performance in English criticism, and one which inaugurated a new phase in critical theory. Prof. J. W. H. Atkins remarks :

> It has been described as an epitome of Renascence theory ; but this description can be misleading if it is taken to mean nothing more than a summary reproduction of classical and Italian doctrine. What gives to the work its undoubted value is its originality, the skill with which Sidney has drawn on earlier teaching, selecting,. adapting and fusing together ideas gathered from many sources, in order to set forth ultimately his own conception of poetry, independently arrived at. Thus apart from the Italians, he makes use of Plato and Aristotle, Horace and Plutarch, but like Horace he subscribes to the authority of no one school of thought. His treatment throughout is of an eclectic kind ; his conclusions are the result of personal reflexion as well as wide reading ; and upon them is stamped the impress of a lofty personality.

The characteristics which make the *Defence of Poetry* a great piece of criticism, and which at the same time note it as a romantic work, for all its dependence on neo-classic learning, are, first, its vindication of the spirit of poetry as opposed to details of form or content ; and second, its democratic attitude—that is, its sweet reason—ableness, its approval of what is genuine and impressive even where not justifiable by rules of art (Irene Samuel).

7

Sidney's Achievement as a Critic

Respect For Aristotle

It now remains for us to assess the influence and achievement of Sidney as a critic. Sidney, as a critic, has manifold achievements to his credit. It is he, who, for the first time, introduced Aristotelianism, into England. According to Spingarn : "The introduction of Aristotelianism into England was the direct result of the influence of the Italian critics ; and the agent in bringing this new influence into English letters was Sir Philip Sidney." Sidney's position as a critic is sound because no other critical English work as broad and as much alive was written in this period. All the important questions are stated and treated in it ; whereas elsewhere there are only technical treatises and discussions on points of detail. What strikes us especially, when we seek to estimate Sidney's book as a whole, is that from beginning to end he respects the precepts of the ancients and unreservedly condemns the literary methods, his own and those of others which were practised in his time.

Sidney's Originality

One noticeable feature of Sidney as a critic is his originality. True, the ancients are ransacked for examples, and the dicta of Greek, Roman or Italian writers regarded as settling questions, as though by the voice of nature still the writer is continuously speaking of what he has seen and known. Thus the essay begins with a reference to a personal experience ; the illustrations from Italy, Hungary, Ireland and Wales are from his own knowledge ; his references to West Indian customs are the fruit of his intense interest in the great discoveries of the age ; his own discontent prompts his reference to the 'over-faint quietness of the time' ; his own taste is expressed in his criticism on the cold artificiality of the love poetry of the day, even to the pedantic tricks of 'coursing of a letter'. Though he uses Aristotle's and Scaliger's Poetics freely in his classification of poets and in many of his definitions, yet he uses

them with the independence which comes of study at first hand ; and his classical quotations are as a rule not too hackneyed or obvious, and seem generally to be made from memory and with such alterations which suited him. With no author was he apparently more entirely familiar than with Plutarch ; a familiarity shown not indeed by direct quotation, but by numerous expressions which came evidently from an almost unconscious reproduction of thoroughly assimilated thoughts.

Manner of Presentation

Sidney's originality of presentation was not confined solely to its subject-matter ; in the manner of presentation too, Sidney impresses us by his freshness and vigour. "Writing for courtly circles and in a vein far removed from the fantastic and pedestrian styles of contemporary pamphlets and disputations he achieved a form of expression unsurpassed even in an age of daring experiments in prose. Nowhere else do we find the same happy mingling of the ideal and the practical, the same blend of dignity and humour, of sincerity and irony, of controlled enthusiasms and racy colloquialisms ; or again, that unstudied simplicity and grace which everywhere pervade the work. And over and above all this was the realistic presentment of his abstract theme in concrete terms. This accounts in a large measure for the appeal of much of Elizabethan prose ; and in Sidney's *Apology* it gives to the work much of its simple charm and effectiveness."

Sidney's Romanticism

With all his zest for classicism, there is a romantic side of Sidney as well. It was only a bold romantic spirit of Sidney that waxed so eloquently in praise of the ballad 'Chevy Chase'. No other critic of his age would ever dream of writing so eloquently of this *genre* of poetry. Sidney's love of beauty, his idealism, his liberal outlook, and his spirited style are all indicative of the romantic traits that characterize his *Apology*. Wimsatt and Brooks rightly point out that "the sources of Sidney's 'Defence' were classical but the spirit was not very sternly classical—Sidney sends up the joyous fireworks of the Italian Renaissance. His colors are enthusiastic, neo-Platonic, ideal, purple and gold. The motion is soaring. He is essentially a theorist of exuberant imagination." Broadly speaking Sidney typifies and illustrates the dual Renaissance tendency—the simultaneous presence of the romantic and the classic. Sidney has given us a judicious fusion of the critical doctrines of Plato. Aristotle Horace, Scaliger, Minturno and a host of many other writers. States Spingarn : "His *Defence of Poesy* is a veritable epitome of the literary criticism of the Italian Renaissance ; and so thoroughly is it imbued with this spirit, that no other work, Italian, French, or English, can be said to give so complete and so noble a conception of the temper and the principles of Renaissance criticism."

Sidney as a Typical Renaissance Figure

Sidney is a typical Renaissance figure in his eclectic temper; his mind was open to all critical ideas about literature current on the continent or his own country. Though traditionally considered as a resort to Gosson, his tract brings out new things, about the 'planet-like music of poetry'. Wimsatt and Brooks have rightly pointed out :

> The Defence of Poesie is a kind of formal beginning of literary theorizing by an English man of letters, and a brilliant enough one—written in the high, enthusiastic, occasionally a-syntactic style of the gifted amateur champion, headlong to out-dazzle the lowness and myopia of professional moral grumblers. The essay reflects and telescopes not only the continental criticism of the century but a certain amount of classical Greek and Roman as well. Passages have been assigned to Minturno, Scaliger, and Castelvetro. And latterly the original sources of neo-classic criticism and anti-criticism, Aristotle's *Poetics* and Plato's *Republic*. Book X (perhaps in Latin Translation such as Pazzi's of Aristotle and Ficino's of Plato), have been urged as the true mountains of Sidney's learning. It is certain that he read little Greek, and it appears likely to us that he was better acquainted with contemporary interpretations of classical criticism than with the latter itself. But it all matters little. Sidney wrote, not a pedant's encyclopedia, but a gentleman's essay.

A New Notion of Imitation

One of the great achievements of Sidney in his treatise is his novel approach to the Aristotelian theory of imitation. He is not really concerned to prove that poetry imitates anything. He asserts that its glory is that poetry is the only one of the arts that does not imitate but creates. He almost proceeds to develop a theory of "ideal imitation", the notion that the poet imitates not the mere appearances of actuality but the hidden reality behind them, but stops short of this to maintain the more naive theory that the poet creates a better world than the one we actually live in. He does not, however, rest content with a mere escapist position. The function of imaginative literature is not to provide us with an escape world in which our imagination can seek consolation for the difficulties and imperfections of real life. It is true that this view of literature as simple escape is often held, and that the great majority of ordinary readers of popular magazine stories today have such view of the function of fiction, but for Sidney this would be a far from adequate defence of poesy, and would certainly not meet

the Puritan charge. No, not for Sidney the ideal world of the poet is of value, because it is both a better world than the real one and it is presented in such a way that the reader is stimulated to try and imitate it in his own practice. Thus the Aristotelian notion of imitation is transferred from the poet to the reader. The poet does not imitate but creates : it is the reader who imitates what the poet creates.

A Significant Courtier-Critic

Sidney occupies position of pride in the history of criticism also because there existed no critical activity before him in England, whereas in England Aristotle's *Poetics* had given rise to a vigorous critical activity during the 15th and 16th centuries. It is rather surprising that the ball of literary criticism in England was set rolling not by scholars but by courtiers or courtly writers like Sir Thomas Elyot who produced his *Governour* in 1530 and Sir Philip Sidney who produced his *Apologie* in 1595. The *Apologie* is the first important landmark in the history of literary criticism in England and an epitome of whatever was significant in the Mediaeval tradition as well as in the contemporary critical thoughts in Italy. In the words of a modern critic : "Deeply coloured though it is with the eclectic temper of the age and its didactic bias, its intrinsic and lasting value as the first piece of creative criticism cannot be overemphasized, apart from its importance in literary history in terms of its influence on critics in the following epochs. Sidney composed his delightful work in a period when creative literature in England was in its process of partruition, though promises of its glorious future were visible in many a budding writer. Sidney's criticism of contemporary drama and poetry centres round the points of immaturity, artificiality and complete ignorance or neglect of the classical so necessary for artistic discipline. His advice, for the time being, however, proved a mere cry in the wilderness, in so far as the popular literature was concerned, which developed, expanded and attained to the plenitude of its lusty youth along its own lines quite contrary to the classical tenets in criticism."

"Greek Meeting Greek"

It may be said that Sidney is not attacking the prejudices of his own time ; he is merely attacking the argument of Plato, *Greek Meeting Greek*. But that argument is strongly refuted by R. A. Scott-James who believes that Sidney does not seriously deal with the argument of Plato, and does not touch his fundamental position, which is philosophic. On the other hand, he definitely indicts the views of poetry current in his day. "From almost the highest estimation of learning", he says "it is fallen to be the laughing stock of children." And he speaks of the learned who inveigh against poetry.

And first, truly to all of them that professing learning inveigh against Poetry may justly be objected, that they go very near to ungratefulness, to seek to deface that, which in the noblest nations and languages that are known, hath been the first light-giver to ignorance, and first Nurse, whose milk by little and little enabled them to feed afterwards of tougher knowledges ; and will they now play the Hedgehog, that being received into the den, drave out his host ? or rather the vipers, that with their birth kill their parents.

Sidney speaks throughout as if the learned and respectable opinion of his time was hostile to poetry—so hostile indeed, that it was worth his while to write an *Apology* to show that poetry does not deserve this scorn, and that it has the very qualities which that respectable opinion would respect : namely, that it instructs, that its purpose is moral, that it is consistent with correct religion.

His Criticism of the Mongrel Tragi-Comedy

And in order to help his case he weeds out the poetry which does not deserve the name. He pours scorn upon the "mongrel Tragi-comedy" of his time—the "gross absurdities", which are "neither right Tragedies, nor right Comedies" : "mingling Kings and Clowns, not because the matter so carrieth it" : thrusting in "Clowns by head and shoulders, to play a part in majestical matters with neither decency nor discretion." He exposes the false view that there is no delight without laughter, and blames writers who "stir laughter in sinful things ; which are rather execrable than ridiculous : or in miserable which are rather to be pitied than scorned."

Justification of Poetry

Sidney pays a higher tribute to poetry when he shows that poets have not only been scientists, historians, philosophers, but the calling of poetry is one which has never failed to command the highest admiration. Even in the body of the work of Plato, the philosopher, "though the inside and strength were Philosophy, the skin as it were and beauty depended most of Poetry." Among the Romans a poet was called *vates*—a diviner, foreseer, or prophet—"so heavily a title did that excellent people bestow upon this heart ravishing knowledge." And may he not presume to say that "the holy David's Psalms are a divine Poem" ?

> For what else is the awaking of his musical instruments ; the often and free changing of persons ; his notable *Prosopopoeias*, when he maketh you as it were, see God coming in his Majesty ; his telling of the Beasts joyfulness and hills leaping, but a heavenly poesy wherein almost he sheweth himself a passionate lover of that unspeakable and everlasting beauty to be seen by the eyes of the mind, only created by faith.
>
> (*Apologie*)

Thus carried away by the critical instinct of a poet, Sidney is better than his argument. Having set out to appease the censors of his time, to prove that even if poetry could delight it was not therefore a "wanton of the theatre", to convince them that it conformed to their didactic standards and satisfied their schoolmasterish demand for edifying knowledge, we find him declaring in spite of himself that it stands supreme in its own right, and that the glory of the Psalms of David was nothing else but the glory of poetry. While, like Horace he still maintains that delightful teaching is the end of Poesy, he is already beginning to put more emphasis on "delight". It may be that he was ready to go even further, and that he would approve the judgment (recalled for us by Professor Saintsbury) uttered by the Italian, Minturno in 1559—"it will be the business of the poet", said this critic using words which recall the doctrine of Longinus, "so to speak in his verses that he may teach, that he may delight, that he may move."

As a Stylist

As a stylist, Sidney has also a distinct place of his own. The form and machinery of the *Arcadia* are again Italian or, more correctly, Spanish ; the classical scenery and imagery are the natural outcome of the renaissance ; but the harmonius beauty of the style is Sidney's own. In appreciation of the charms of nature it is ahead of its age : and though its lack of plot and its prolix descriptions make it wearisome to the modern reader, it was by far the most 'popular novel' of its time. The *Apologie* does not labour under the reproach of prolixity or tediousness. Though some of its arguments and theories would be rejected today, it is full of insight and clear statement, and delivers sober judgments which are as applicable now as when Sidney penned them. The charm of the style has often been remarked and it has been declared by competent critics to be the first piece of really harmonious prose in the English language. Without committing ourselves to so general an assertion, we may yet recognize the beauty of such passages as these :

> With a tale forsooth he commeth to you, with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the Chimney Corner ; and pretending no more, doth intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue.

> So is it in men—most of which are childish in their best things, till they be cradled in their grave or the description of the historian better acquainted with a thousand years ago, than with the present age, and yet better knowing how this world goeth, than how his own wit runneth : curious for antiquities, and inquisitive for novelties ; a wonder to young folks, and a tyrant in table-talk.

Or the definition of learning as this purifying of wit, this enrichin g of memory, enabling of judgment, and enlarging of conceit : or o f reading as "the gathering of many knowledges" etc., etc.

Lucid and Simple Style

These illustrations from the *Apologie* show beyond doubt that, besides originality which is the distinctive feature of this Essay, Sidney's style is characterised by lucidity and simplicity, dignity and concreteness, humour and irony, and charm and raciness. To recall the beautiful expression of Prof. Atkins : "As a fitting legacy of one of England's noblest and greatest souls the work will continue to charm modern readers with its idealism, its sanity, its humour, and its grace."

Sidney's Merits and Limitations

When all is said and done, the question remains to be asked : What then is our final assessment of Sidney as a critic ? That he has his own limitations cannot be questioned. That Sidney makes mistakes both in gross and detail—that he even makes some rather serious mistakes from the mere "point of view of the examiner" is of course undeniable. He has a good deal of the merely traditional mode of Renaissance respect for classical—and for some modern authority. He, however is by no means preemptory about the new "versifying" ; and in particular has absolutely none of the craze against rhyme as rhyme which animated persons of every degree of ability, from Stanyhurst to Milton during more than a century. His remarks on versification are, however, too scanty to need any comment.

Sidney's Two Major Heresies

Prof. Saintsbury refers to two major heresies of Sidney, namely—the declaration that "verse is not inseparable from poetry, and the denunciation of tragi-comedy". "In both", says Sidney, "the authority of the ancients must again bear good part of the blame, but in both he has additional excuses. As to the 'pestilent heresy of prose poetry', he is at least not unwilling to argue on the hypothesis that verse were necessary to poetry, though he does not think it is. He is quite sure that verse is anyhow a nobler medium than prose. His classical authorities were quite clear on this point ; and as yet there was nothing to be quoted on the other side—at least in English...In English itself not one single great or even good play certainly existed on the model at Sidney's death ; and from what we have of what did exist, we can judge how the rough verse, the clumsy construction, or rather the absence of construction, the entire absence of clear character-projection, and the higgedly-piggedly of huddled horrors and horse-play, must have shocked a taste delicate in itself and nursed upon classical and Italian literature. And it is note-worthy that even *Gorboduc*, with all its

regularity and 'Senecation', does not bribe Sidney to overlook at least some of its defects. He is here, as elsewhere—as indeed throughout—neither blind nor bigoted. He is only in the position of a man very imperfectly supplied with actual experiments and observations, confronted with a stage of creative production but just improving from a very bad taste and relying on old and approved methods as against new ones which had as yet no success."

Summing Up

Thus, with all his minor limitations, Sir Philip Sidney is the father of English criticism just as Chaucer is the father of English poetry. To Cowper he was 'a warbler of poetic prose'; to Shelley a 'sublimely mild, Spirit without spot'; and to us, he is not only an ideal Renaissance gentleman, but also an exquisite combination of the courtier, the soldier and the scholar, 'a theorist of exuberant imagination'.

Sidney, thus, if not a critic *par excellence*, does enjoy a place of pride in the pages of English Literature. Martin Seymour-Smith states that though Sidney was by no means as self-contradictory and enigmatic as Sir Walter Raleigh, like all the Elizabethans he was to some extent a divided man. We are not concerned here with Sidney as a man, nor are we to probe into his trivial weaknesses we are to assess his qualities as a critic. Though he died young, "inheritor of unfulfilled renown", he adorned whatever he wrote by grace and splendour. To quote Prof. V. Chatterjee : "Applause is certainly due to the man who not only is the father of English criticism, but also the greatest of Elizabethan critics. Sidney has been described as the English prototype of Castiglione's Courtier : practical, serious, lively, intelligent. These four words sum up Sidney the critic no less than Sidney the man."

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An Apology for Poetry

(TEXT)

When the right virtuous Edward Wotton and I were at the Emperor's court together, we gave ourselves to learn horsemanship of John Pietro Pugliano, one that with great commendation had the place of an esquire in his stable ; and he, according to the fertileness of the Italian wit, did not only afford us the demonstration of his practice, but sought to enrich our minds with the contemplations therein which he thought most precious. But with none I remember mine ears were at any time more loaded, than when—either angered with slow payment, or moved with our learner-like admiration—he exercised his speech in the praise of his faculty. He said soldiers were the noblest estate of mankind, and horsemen the noblest of soldiers. He said they were the masters of war and ornaments of peace, speedy goers and strong abiders, triumphers both in camps and courts. Nay, to so unbelieved a point he proceeded, as that no earthly thing bred such wonder to a prince as to be a good horseman ; skill of government was but a pedanteria in comparison. Then would he add certain praises, by telling what a peerless beast the horse was, the only serviceable courtier without flattery, the beast of most beauty, faithfulness, courage, and such more, that if I had not been a piece of a logician before I came to him, I think he would have persuaded me to have wished myself a horse. But thus much at least with his no few words he drove into me, that self-love is better than any gilding to make that seem gorgeous wherein ourselves be parties.

Wherein if Pugliano's strong affection and weak arguments will not satisfy you, I will give you a nearer example of myself, who, I know not by what mischance, in these my not old years and idlest times, having slipped into the title of a. poet, am provoked to say something unto you in the defence of that my unelected vocation, which if I handle with more goodwill than good reasons, bear with me, since the scholar is to be pardoned that followed the steps of his master.

And yet I must say that, as I have just cause to make a pitiful defence of poor poetry, which from almost the highest estimation of learning is fallen to be the laughing-stock of children, so have I need to bring some more available proofs, since the former is by no man barred of his deserved credit, the silly latter has had even the names of philosophers used to the defacing of it with great danger of civil war among the muses.

And first, truly, to all them that, professing learning, inveigh against poetry, may justly be objected that they go very near to ungratefulness, to seek to deface that which, in the noblest nations and languages that are known, has been the first light-giver to ignorance, and first nurse, whose milk by little and little enabled them to feed afterwards of tougher knowledges. And will they now play the hedgehog, that being received into the den, drove out his host? Or rather the vipers, that with their birth kill their parents? Let learned Greece in any of her manifold sciences be able to show me one book before Musaeus, Homer, and Hesiod, all three nothing else but poets. Nay, let any history be brought that can say any writers were there before them, if they were not men of the same skill, as Orpheus, Linus, and some other are named, who, having been the first of that country that made pens deliverers of their knowledge to their posterity, may justly challenge to be called their fathers in learning. For not only in time they had this priority (although in itself antiquity be venerable) but went before them as causes, to draw with their charming sweetness the wild untamed wits to an admiration of knowledge. So as Amphion was said to move stones with his poetry to build Thebes, and Orpheus to be listened to by beasts, indeed stony and beastly people. So among the Romans were Livius Andronicus and Ennius; so in the Italian language the first that made it aspire to be a treasure-house of science were the poets Dante, Boccaccio, and Petrarch; so in our English were Gower and Chaucer, after whom, encouraged and delighted with their excellent foregoing, others have followed to beautify our mother tongue, as well in the same kind as in other arts.

This did so notably show itself, that the philosophers of Greece dare not a long time appear to the world but under the masks of poets. So Thales, Empedocles, and Parmenides sang their natural philosophy in verses; so did Pythagoras and Phocylides their moral counsels; so did Tyrtaeus in war matters, and Solon in matters of policy; or rather they, being poets, did exercise their delightful vein in those points of highest knowledge which before them lay hid to the world. For that wise Solon was directly a poet it is manifest, having written in verse the notable fable of the Atlantic Island which was continued by Plato. And truly even Plato whosoever well considered, shall find that in the body of his work, though the inside and strength

were philosophy, the skin, as it were, and beauty depended most of poetry. For all stand upon dialogues; where he feigned many honest burgesses of Athens to speak of such matters that, if they had been set on the rack, they would never have confessed them: besides his poetical describing the circumstances of their meetings, as the well-ordering of a banquet, the delicacy of a walk, with interlacing mere tales, as Gyges' *Ring* and others, which who knew not to be flowers of poetry did never walk into Apollo's garden.

And even historiographers (although their lips sound of things done, and verity be written in their foreheads), have been glad to borrow both fashion and perchance weight of poets. So Herodotus entitled his history by the name of the nine Muses; and both he and all the rest that followed him either stole or usurped of poetry their passionate describing of passions, the many particularities of battles which no man could affirm, or, if that be denied me, long orations put in the mouths of great kings and captains, which it is certain they never pronounced.

So that truly neither philosopher nor historiographer could, at the first, have entered into the gates of popular judgements, if they had not taken a great passport of poetry; which in all nations at this day, where learning flourishes not, is plain to be seen, in all which they have some feeling of poetry. In Turkey, besides their lawgiving divines they have no other writers but poets. In our neighbour-country Ireland, where truly learning goes very bare, yet are their poets held in a devout reverence. Even among the most barbarous and simple Indians, where no writing is, yet have they their poets, who make and sing songs (which they call areytos), both of their ancestors' deeds and praises of their gods. A sufficient probability that, if ever learning come among them, it must be by having their hard dull wits softened and sharpened with the sweet delights of poetry; for until they find a pleasure in the exercises of the mind, great promises of much knowledge will little persuade them that know not the fruits of knowledge. In Wales, the true remnant of the ancient Britons, as there are good authorities to show the long time they had poets, which they called bards, so through all the conquests of Romans, Saxons, Danes, and Normans, some of whom did seek to ruin all memory of learning from among them, yet do their poets even to this day last; so as it is not more notable in soon beginning, than in long continuing.

But since the authors of most of our sciences were the Romans, and before them the Greeks, let us a little stand upon their authorities, but even so far as to see what names they have given unto this now scorned skill.

Among the Romans a poet was called *vates*, which is as much as a diviner, foreseer, or prophet, as by his conjoined words, *vaticinium* and *vaticinari*, is manifest; so heavenly a title did that excellent people bestow upon this heart-ravishing knowledge. And so far were they carried into the admiration thereof, that they thought in the chanceable hitting upon any such verses great foretokens of their following fortunes were placed: whereupon grew the word of *Sortes Virgilianae*, when by sudden opening Virgil's book they lighted upon any verse of his making; whereof the Histories of the Emperors Lives are full: as of Albinus, the governor of our island, who in his childhood met with this verse:

Arma amens capio, nec sat rationis in armis,

and in his age performed it; which although it were a very vain and godless superstition, as also it was to think that spirits were commanded by such verses—whereupon this word charms, derived of *carmina*, came—so yet served it to show the great reverence those wits were held in, and altogether not without ground, since both the oracles of Delphos and Sibylla's prophecies were wholly delivered in verses; for that same exquisite observing of number and measure in words, and that high-flying liberty of conceit proper to the poet, did seem to have some divine force in it.

And may not I presume a little further to show the reasonableness of this word *vates*, and say that the holy David's Psalms are a divine poem? If I do, I shall not do it without the testimony of great learned men, both ancient and modern. But even the name Psalms will speak for me, which, being interpreted, is nothing but Songs; then, that it is fully written in metre, as all learned Hebricians agree, although the rules be not yet fully found; lastly and principally, his handling his prophecy, which is merely poetical. For what else is the awaking his musical instruments, the often and free changing of persons, his notable *prosopopoeias*, when he makes you, as it were, see God coming in His majesty, his telling of the beasts' joyfulness and hill's leaping, but a heavenly poesy, wherein almost he shows himself a passionate lover of that unspeakable and everlasting beauty to be seen by the eyes of the mind, only cleared by faith? But truly, now, having named him, I fear me I seem to profane that holy name, applying it to poetry, which is among us thrown down to so ridiculous an estimation. But they that with quiet judgements will look a little deeper into it, shall find the end and working of it such as, being rightly applied, deserve not to be scourged out of the church of God.

But now let us see how the Greeks named it and how they deemed of it. The Greeks called him a Poet, which

name has, as the most excellent, gone through other languages. It comes of this word *poiein*, which is "to make"; wherein I know not whether by luck or wisdom we Englishmen have met with the Greeks in calling him a maker. Which name, how high and incomparable a title it is, I had rather were known by marking the scope of other sciences than by my partial allegation.

There is no art delivered unto mankind that has not the works of nature for his principal object, without which they could not consist, and on which they so depend as they become actors and players, as it were, of what nature will have set forth. So does the astronomer look upon the stars, and, by that he sees, set down what order nature has taken therein. So do the geometrician and arithmetician in their divers sorts of quantities. So does the musician in times tell you which by nature agree, which not. The natural philosopher thereon has his name, and the moral philosopher stands upon the natural virtues, vices, and passions of man; and "follow nature," says he, "therein, and thou shalt not err." The lawyer says what men have determined; the historian what men have done. The grammarian speaks only of the rules of speech, and the rhetorician and logician, considering what in nature will soonest prove and persuade, thereon give artificial rules, which still are compassed within the circle of a question, according to the proposed matter. The physician weighs the nature of man's body, and the nature of things helpful or hurtful unto it. And the metaphysic, though it be in the second and abstract notions, and therefore be counted supernatural, yet does he, indeed, build upon the depth of nature.

Only the poet, disdaining to be tied to any such subjection, lifted up with the vigour of his own invention, does grow, in effect, into another nature, in making things either better than nature brings forth, or, quite anew, forms such as never were in nature, as the heroes, demi-gods, cyclops, chimeras, furies, and such like; so as he goes hand in hand with nature, not enclosed within the narrow warrant of her gifts, but freely ranging only within the zodiac of his own wit. Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done; neither with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers nor whatsoever else may make the too-much-loved earth more lovely; her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden.

But let those things alone, and go to man—for whom as the other things are, so it seems in him her uttermost cunning is employed—and know whether she have brought forth so true a lover as Theagenes; so constant a friend as Pylades; so valiant a man as Orlando; so right a prince as Xenophon's Cyrus; so excellent a man every way as Virgil's Aeneas? Neither let this be jestingly conceived, because the works of the one be essential,

the other in imitation or fiction; for any understanding knows the skill of the artificer stands in that idea, or fore-conceit of the work, and not in the work itself. And that the poet had that idea is manifest, by delivering them forth in such excellency as he had imagined them. Which delivering forth, also, is not wholly imaginative, as we are wont to say by them that build castles in the air; but so far substantially it works, not only to make a Cyrus, which had been but a particular excellency, as nature might have done, but to bestow a Cyrus upon the world to make many Cyruses, if they will learn aright why and how that maker made him. Neither let it be deemed too saucy a comparison to balance the highest point of man's wit with the efficacy of nature; but rather give right honour to the Heavenly Maker of that maker, who, having made man to His own likeness, set him beyond and over all the works of that second nature. Which in nothing he shows so much as in poetry, when, with the force of a divine breath, he brings things forth far surpassing her doings, with no small argument to the incredulous of that first accursed fall of Adam—since our erected wit makes us know what perfection is, and yet our infected will keeps us from reaching unto it. But these arguments will by few be understood, and by fewer granted; thus much I hope will be given me, that the Greeks, with some probability of reason, gave him the name above all names of learning.

Now let us go to a more ordinary opening of him, that the truth may be more palpable; and so, I hope, though we get not so unmatched a praise as the etymology of his names will grant, yet his very description, which no man will deny, shall not justly be barred from a principal commendation.

Poesy, therefore, is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termed it in his word *Mimes's*, that is to say, representing, counterfeiting, or figuring forth; to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture, with this end, to teach and delight.

Of this have been three several kinds. The chief, both in antiquity and excellency, were they that did imitate the inconceivable excellencies of God. Such were David in his Psalms; Solomon in his Song of Songs, in his Ecclesiastes and Proverbs; Moses and Deborah in their Hymns; and the writer of Job; which, beside other, the learned Emanuel Tremellius and Franciscus Junius do entitle the poetical part of the Scripture. Against these none will speak that has the Holy Ghost in due holy reverence. In this kind, though in a full wrong divinity, were Orpheus, Amphion, Homer in his hymns, and many other, both Greeks and Romans. And this poesy must be used by whosoever will follow St. James his counsel in singing Psalms when they are

merry; and I know is used with the fruit of comfort by some, when, in sorrowful pangs of their death-bringing sins, they find the consolation of the never-leaving goodness.

The second kind is of them that deal with matters philosophical: either moral, as Tyrtaeus, Phocylides, and Cato; or natural, as Lucretius and Virgil's Georgics; or astronomical, as Manilius and Pontanus; or historical, as Lucan; which who mislike, the fault is in their judgement, quite out of taste, and not in the sweet food of sweetly uttered knowledge.

But because this second sort is wrapped within the fold of the proposed subject, and takes not the free course of his own invention, whether they properly be poets or no let grammarians dispute, and go to the third, indeed right poets, of whom chiefly this question arises. Betwixt whom and these second is such a kind of difference as betwixt the meaner sort of painters, who counterfeit only such faces as are set before them, and the more excellent, who having no law but wit, bestow that in colours upon you which is fittest for the eye to see; as the constant though lamenting look of Lucretia, when she punished in herself another's fault; wherein he painted not Lucretia, whom he never saw, but painted the outward beauty of such a virtue. For these third be they which most properly do imitate to teach and delight; and to imitate borrow nothing of what is, has been, or shall be; but range, only reined with learned discretion, into the divine consideration of what may be and should be. These be they that, as the first and most noble sort, may justly be termed *vates*; so these are waited on in the most excellent languages and best understandings with the fore-described names of poets. For these, indeed, do merely make to imitate, and imitate both to delight and teach, and delight to move men to take that goodness in hand, which without delight they would fly as from a stranger; and teach to make them know that goodness whereunto they are moved; which being the noblest scope to which ever any learning was directed, yet want there not idle tongues to bark at them.

These be subdivided into sundry more special denominations. The most notable be the heroic, lyric, tragic, comic, satiric, iambic, elegiac, pastoral, and certain others, some of these being termed according to the matter they deal with, some by the sorts of verses they liked best to write in—for indeed the greatest part of poets have apparelled their poetical inventions in that numberous kind of writing which is called verse. Indeed but apparelled, verse being but an ornament and no cause to poetry, since there have been many most excellent poets that never versified, and now swarm many versifiers that need never answer to the name of poets. For Xenophon, who

did imitate so excellently as to give us *effigiem justi imperii*—the portraiture of a just empire, under the name of Cyprus (as Cicero said of him) made therein an absolute heroical poem; so did Heliodorus in his sugared invention of that picture of love in Theagenes and Chariclea; and yet both these wrote in prose. Which I speak to show that it is not rhyming and versing that make a poet (no more than a long gown makes an advocate, who, though he pleaded in armour, should be an advocate and no soldier), but it is that feigning notable images of virtues, vices, or what else, with that delightful teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a poet by. Although indeed the Senate of Poets has chosen verse as their fittest raiment, meaning, as in matter they passed all in all, so in manner to go beyond them; not speaking (table-talk fashion, or like men in a dream), words as they chanceably fall from the mouth, but peizing each syllable of each word by just proportion, according to the dignity of the subject.

Now, therefore, it shall not be amiss, first to weigh this latter sort of poetry by his works, and then by his parts; and if in neither of these anatomies he be condemnable, I hope we shall obtain a more favourable sentence. This purifying of wit, this enriching of memory, enabling of judgement, and enlarging of conceit, which commonly we call learning, under what name soever it come forth or to what immediate end soever it be directed, the final end is to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clayey lodgings, can be capable of. This, according to the inclination of man, bred many-formed impressions. For some that thought this felicity principally to be gotten by knowledge, and no knowledge to be so high or heavenly as acquaintance with the stars, gave themselves to astronomy; others, persuading themselves to be demi-gods if they knew the causes of things, became natural and supernatural philosophers. Some an admirable delight drew to music, and some the certainty of demonstration to the mathematics; but all, one and other, having this scope: to know, and by knowledge to lift up the mind from the dungeon of the body to the enjoying his own divine essence. But when by the balance of experience it was found that the astronomer, looking to the stars, might fall into a ditch, that the inquiring philosopher might be blind in himself, and the mathematician might draw forth a straight line with a crooked heart; then lo! did proof, the overruler of opinions, make manifest, that all these are but serving sciences, which, as they have each a private end in themselves, so yet are they all directed to the highest end of the mistress-knowledge, by the Greeks called *architektonike*, which stands, as I think, in the knowledge of a man's self, in the ethic and politic consideration, with the end of well-doing, and not of

well-knowing only ; even as the saddler's next end is to make a good saddle, but his further end to serve a nobler faculty, which is horsemanship ; so the horseman's to soldiery ; and the soldier not only to have the skill, but to perform the practice of a soldier. So that the ending end of all earthly learning being virtuous action, those skills that most serve to bring forth that have a most just title to be princes over all the rest ; wherein, if we can show, the poet is worthy to have it before any other competitors.

Among whom as principal challengers step forth the moral philosophers ; whom, me thinks, I see coming toward me with a sullen gravity (as though they could not abide vice by daylight), rudely clothed, for to witness outwardly their contempt of outward things ; with books in their hands against glory, whereto they set their names ; sophistically speaking against subtlety ; and angry with any man in whom they see the foul fault of anger. These men, casting largess as they go of Definitions, Divisions, and Distinctions, with a scornful interrogative do soberly ask whether it be possible to find any path so ready to lead a man to virtue, as that which teaches what virtue is, and teaches it not only by delivering forth his very being, his causes and effects, but also by making known his enemy, vice, which must be destroyed and his cumbersome, servant, passion, which must be mastered, by showing the generalities that contain it, and the specialities that are derived from it ; lastly, by plain setting down how it extends itself out of the limits of a man's own little world, to the government of families, and maintaining of public societies ?

The historian scarcely gives leisure to the moralist to say so much, but that he, loaded with old mouse-eaten records, authorizing himself for the most part upon other histories, whose greatest authorities are built upon the notable foundation of hearsay ; having much ado to accord differing writers, and to pick truth out of partiality ; better acquainted with a thousand years ago than with the present age, and yet better knowing how this world goes than how his own wit runs ; curious for antiquities and inquisitive of novelties, a wonder to young folks and a tyrant in table-talk ; denies, in a great chafe, that any man for teaching of virtue and virtuous actions is comparable to him. "I am *testis temporum*, *lux veritatis*, *vita memoriae*, *magistra vitae*, *nuntia vetustatis*, etc. The philosopher", said he, "teaches a disputative virtue, but I do an active. His virtue is excellent in the dangerless Academy of Plato, but mine shows forth her honourable face in the battles of Marathon, Pharsalia, Poitiers, and Agincourt. He teaches virtue by certain abstract considerations, but I only bid you follow the footing of them that have gone before you. Old-aged experience goes beyond

the fine-witted philosopher; but I give the experience of many ages. Lastly, if he make the song-book, I put the learner's hand to the lute; and if he be the guide, I am the light." Then would he allege you innumerable examples, conferring story by story, how much the wisest senators and princes have been directed by the credit of history, as Brutus, Alphonsus of Aragon (and who not, if need be?). At length the long line of their disputation makes a point in this, that the one gives the precept, and the other the example.

Now whom shall we find, since the question stands for the highest form in the school of learning, to be moderator? Truly, as me seems, the poet; and if not a moderator, even the man that ought to carry the title from them both, and much more from all other serving sciences. Therefore compare we the poet with the historian and with the moral philosopher; and if he goes beyond them both, no other human skill can match him. For as for the divine, with all reverence it is ever to be excepted, not only for having his scope as far beyond any of these as eternity exceeds a moment, but even for passing each of these in themselves. And for the lawyer, though *Jus* be the daughter of Justice, and justice the chief of virtues, yet because he seeks to make men good rather *formidine poenae* than *virtutis amore*; or, to say right, does not endeavour to make men good, but that their evil hurt not others; having no care, so he be a good citizen, how bad a man he be; therefore, as our wickedness makes him necessary, and necessity makes him honourable, so is he not in the deepest truth to stand in rank with these, who all endeavour to take naughtiness away, and plant goodness even in the secretest cabinet of our souls. And these four are all that any way deal in that consideration of men's manners, which being the supreme knowledge, they that best breed it deserve the best commendation.

The philosopher therefore and the historian are they which would win the goal, the one by precept, the other by example; but both, not having both, do both halt. For the philosopher, setting down with thorny argument the bare rule, is so hard of utterance and so misty to be conceived, that one that has no other guide but him shall wade in him till he be old, before he shall find sufficient cause to be honest. For his knowledge stands so upon the abstract and general, that happy is that man who may understand him, and more happy that can apply what he does understand. On the other side, the historian, wanting the precept, is so tied, not to what should be but to what is, to the particular truth of things and not to the general reason of things, that his example draws no necessary consequence, and therefore a less fruitful doctrine.

Now does the peerless poet perform both ; for whatsoever the philosopher said should be done, he gave a perfect picture of it in some one by whom he presupposed it was done, so as he coupled the general notion with the particular example. A perfect picture, I say ; for he yields to the powers of the mind an image of that whereof the philosopher bestows but a wordish description, which does neither strike, pierce, nor possess the sight of the soul so much as that other does. For as, in outward things, to a man that had never seen an elephant or a rhinoceros, who should tell him most exquisitely all their shapes, colour, bigness, and particular marks ; or of a gorgeous palace, the architecture, with declaring the full beauties, might well make the hearer able to repeat, as it were by rote, all he had heard, yet should never satisfy his inward conceit with being witness to itself of a true lively knowledge ; but the same man, as soon as he might see those beasts well painted, or that house well in model, should straightways grow, without need of any description, to a judicial comprehending of them : so no doubt the philosopher, with his learned definitions, be it of virtues or vices, matters of public policy or private government, replenishes the memory with many infallible grounds of wisdom, which notwithstanding lie dark before the imaginative and judging power, if they be not illuminated or figured forth by the speaking picture of poesy.

Tully takes much pains, and many times not without poetical helps, to make us know the force love of our country has in us. Let us but hear old Anchises speaking in the midst of Troy's flames, or see Ulysses, in the fulness of all Calypso's delights, bewail his absence from barren and beggarly Ithaca. Anger, the Stoics said, was a short madness. Let but Sophocles bring you Ajax on a stage, killing or whipping sheep and oxen, thinking them the army of Greens, with their chieftains Agamemnon and Menelaus, and tell me if you have not a more familiar insight into anger, than finding in the schoolmen his genus and difference. See whether wisdom and temperance in Ulysses and Diomedes, valour in Achilles, friendship in Nisus and Euryalus, even to an ignorant man carry not an apparent shining. And, contrarily, the remorse of conscience in Oedipus ; the soon-repenting pride of Agamemnon ; the self-devouring cruelty in his father Atreus ; the violence of ambition in the two Theban brothers ; the sour sweetness of revenge in Medea ; and, to fall lower, the Terentian Gnatho and our Chaucer's Pandar, so expressed that we now use their names to signify their own natural states laid to the view, that we seem not to hear of them, but clearly to see through them.

But even in the most excellent determination of goodness, what philosopher's counsel can so readily direct a prince, as

the feigned Cyrus in Xenophon? Or a virtuous man in all fortunes, as Aeneas in Virgil? Or a whole commonwealth, as the way of Sir Thomas More's Utopia? I say the way, because where Sir Thomas More erred, it was the fault of the man, and not of the poet; for that way of patterning a commonwealth was most absolute, though he, perchance, had not so absolutely performed it. For the question is, whether the feigned image of poesy, or the regular instruction of philosophy, has the more force in teaching. Wherein if the philosophers have more rightly showed themselves philosophers than the poets have attained to the high top of their profession, (as in truth,

Mediocribus esse poetis
Non Dii, non homines, non concessere columnae),

it is, I say again, not the fault of the art, but that by few men that art can be accomplished.

Certainly, even our Saviour Christ could as well have given the moral commonplaces of uncharitableness and humbleness as the divine narration of Dives and Lazarus; or of disobedience and mercy, as that heavenly discourse of the lost child and the gracious father; but that his through-searching wisdom knew the estate of Dives burning in hell, and of Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, would more constantly, as it were, inhabit both the memory and judgement. Truly, for myself, meseems I see before mine eyes the lost child's disdainful prodigality turned to envy a swine's dinner; which by the learned divines are thought not historical acts, but instructing parables.

For conclusion, I say the philosopher teaches, but he teaches obscurely, so as the learned only can understand him; that is to say, he teaches them that are already taught. But the poet is the food for the tenderest stomachs; the poet is indeed the right popular philosopher. Whereof Aesop's tales give good proof; whose pretty allegories, stealing under the formal tales of beasts, make many, more beastly than beasts, begin to hear the sound of virtue from those dumb speakers.

But now may it be alleged that if this imagining of matters be so fit for the imagination, then must the historian needs surpass, who brings you images of true matters, such as indeed were done, and not such as fantastically or falsely may be suggested to have been done. Truly, Aristotle himself, in his Discourse of Poesy, plainly determines this question, saying that poetry is *philosophoteron* and *spoudaioteron*, that is to say, it is more philosophical and more studiously serious than history. His reason is, because poesy deals with *katholou*, that is to say with the universal consideration, and the history with

kath' hekaston, the particular. "Now", said he, "the universal weighs what is fit to be said or done, either in likelihood or necessity, which the poesy considers in his imposed names; and the particular only marks whether Alcibiades did, or suffered, this or that": thus far Aristotle. Which reason of his, as all his, is most full of reason.

For, indeed, if the question were whether it were better to have a particular act truly or falsely set down, there is no doubt which is to be chosen, no more than whether you had rather have Vespasian's picture right as he was, or, at the painter's pleasure, nothing resembling. But if the question be for your own use and learning, whether it be better to have it set down as it should be or as it was, then certainly is more doctrinable the feigned Cyrus of Xenophon than the true Cyrus in Justin; and the feigned Aeneas in Virgil than the right Aeneas in Dares Phrygius; as to a lady that desired to fashion her countenance to the best grace, a painter should more benefit her to portrait a most sweet face, writing Canidia upon it, than to paint Canidia as she was, who, Horace swore, was fouled and ill-favoured.

If the poet do his part aright, he will show you in Tantalus, Atreus, and such like, nothing that is not to be shunned; in Cyrus, Aeneas, Ulysses, each thing to be followed. Where the historian, bound to tell things as things were, cannot be liberal (without he will be poetical), of a perfect pattern, but, as in Alexander, or Scipio himself, show doings, some to be liked, some to be misliked; and then how will you discern what to follow, but by your own discretion, which you had without reading Quintus Curtius? And whereas a man may say, though in universal consideration of doctrine the poet prevails, yet that the history, in his saying such a thing was done, does warrant a man more in that he shall follow, the answer is manifest: that if he stand upon that *was*, as if he should argue, because it rained yesterday therefore it should rain today, then indeed it has some advantage to a gross conceit. But if he know an example only informs a conjectured likelihood, and so go by reason, the poet does so far exceed him as he is to frame his example to that which is most reasonable, be it in war-like, politic, or private matters; where the historian in his bare *was* has many times that which we call fortune to over-rule the best wisdom. Many times he must tell events whereof he can yield no cause; or if he do, it must be poetically.

For, that a feigned example has as much force to teach as a true example (for as for to move, it is clear, since the feigned may be tuned to the highest key of passion), let us take one example wherein a poet and a historian do concur. Herodotus and Justin do both testify that Zopyrus, king Darius' faithful servant, seeing his master long resisted by the rebellious Babylonians, feigned himself in extreme disgrace of

his king; for verifying of which he caused his own nose and ears to be cut off, and so flying to the Babylonians, was received, and for his known valour so far credited, that he did find means to deliver them over to Darius. Much like matter does Livy record of Tarquinius and his son. Xenophon excellently feigned such another stratagem, performed by Abradates in Cyprus' behalf. Now would I fain know, if occasion be presented unto you to serve your prince by such an honest dissimulation, why do you not as well learn it of Xenophon's fiction as of the other's verity? And, truly, so much the better, as you shall save your nose by the bargain; for Abradates did not counterfeit so far.

So, then, the best of the historian is subject to the poet; for whatsoever action or faction, whatsoever counsel, policy, or war-stratagem the historian is bound to recite, that may the poet, if he list, with his imitation make his own, beautifying it both for further teaching and more delighting, as it pleases him; having all, from Dante's Heaven to his Hell, under the authority of his pen. Which if I be asked what poets have done so? As I might well name some, yet say I, and say again, I speak of the art, and not of the artificer.

Now, to that which commonly is attributed to the praise of histories, in respect of the notable learning is gotten by marking the success, as though therein a man should see virtue exalted and vice punished, truly that commendation is peculiar to poetry and far off from history. For, indeed, poetry ever sets virtue so out in her best colours, making Fortune her well-waiting handmaid, that one must needs be enamoured of her. Well may you see Ulysses in a storm, and in other hard plights; but they are but exercises of patience and magnanimity, to make them shine the more in the near following prosperity. And, of the contrary part, if evil men come to the stage, they ever go out, as the tragedy writer answered to one that misliked the show of such persons so manacled, as they little animate folks to follow them. But the historian, being captived to the truth of a foolish world, is many times a terror from well-doing, and an encouragement to unbridled wickedness. For see we not valiant Miltiades rot in his fetters? The just Phocion and the accomplished Socrates put to death like traitors? The cruel Severus live prosperously? The excellent Severus miserably murdered? Sylla and Marius dying in their beds? Pompey and Cicero slain then, when they would have thought exile a happiness? See we not virtuous Cato driven to kill himself, and rebel Caesar so advanced that his name yet, after sixteen hundred years, lasted in the highest honour? And mark but even Caesar's own words of the forenamed Sylla (who in that only did honestly, to put down his dishonest tyranny), *literas nescivit*: as if want of learning caused him to do well. He meant

it not by poetry, which, not content with earthly plagues, devises new punishments in hell for tyrants; nor yet by philosophy, which teaches *occidendos esse* but, no doubt, by skill in history, for that indeed can afford you Cypselus, Periander, Phalaris Dionysius, and I know not how many more of the same kennel, that speed well enough in their abominable injustice or usurpation.

I conclude, therefore, that he excells history, not only in furnishing the mind with knowledge, but in setting it forward to that which deserves to be called and accounted good; which setting forward, and moving to well-doing, indeed sets the laurel crown upon the poet as victorious, not only of the historian, but over the philosopher, howsoever in teaching it may be questionable. For suppose it be granted (that which I suppose with great reason may be denied), that the philosopher, in respect of his methodical proceeding, does teach more perfectly than the poet, yet do I think that no man is so much *philophilosophos* as to compare the philosopher in moving with the poet. And that moving is of a higher degree than teaching, it may by this appear, that it is well nigh both the cause and the effect of teaching; for who will be taught, if he be not moved with desire to be taught? And what so much good does that teaching bring forth (I speak still of moral doctrine), as that it moves one to do that which it does teach? For, as Aristotle says, it is not *gnosis* and *praxis* must be the fruit; and how *praxis* can be, without being moved to practise, it is no hard matter to consider. The philosopher shows you the way, he informs you of the particularities, as well of the tediousness of the way, as of the pleasant lodging you shall have when your journey is ended, as of the many by-turnings that may divert you from your way; but this is to no man but to him that will read him, and read him with attentive, studious painfulness; which constant desire whosoever has in him, has already passed half the hardness of the way, and therefore is beholding to the philosopher but for the other half. Nay, truly, learned men have learnedly thought, that where once reason has so much overmastered passion as that the mind has a free desire to do well, the inward light each mind has in itself is as good as a philosopher's book; since in nature we know it is well to do well, and what is well and what is evil, although not in the words of art which philosophers bestow upon us; for out of natural conceit the philosophers drew it. But to be moved to do that which we know, or to be moved with desire to know, *hoc opus, hic labor est*.

Now therein of all sciences (I speak still of human, and according to the human conceit), is our poet the monarch. For he does not only show the way, but gives so sweet a prospect into the way as will entice any man to enter into it. Nay, he does, as if your journey should lie through a fair vineyard, at

the very first give you a cluster of grapes, that full of that taste you may long to pass further. He begins not with obscure definitions, which must blur the margin with interpretations, and load the memory with doubtfulness. But he comes to you with words set in delightful proportion, either accompanied with, or prepared for, the well-enchanting skill of music; and with a tale, forsooth, he comes unto you, with a tale which holds children from play, and old men from the chimney-corner; and, pretending no more, does intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue: even as the child is often brought to take most wholesome things, by hiding them in such other as have a pleasant taste—which, if one should begin to tell them the nature of the aloes of rhubarb they should receive, would sooner take their physic at their ears than at their mouth. So is it in men (most of which are childish in the best things, till they be cradled in their graves), glad they will be to hear the tales of Hercules, Achilles, Cyrus, Aeneas; and, hearing them, must needs hear the right description of wisdom, valour, and justice; which, if they had been barely—that is to say philosophically—set out, they would swear they be brought to school again.

That imitation whereof poetry is, has the most conveniency to nature of all other, insomuch that, as Aristotle says, those things which in themselves are horrible as cruel battles, unnatural monsters, are made in poetical imitation delightful. Truly, I have known men, that even with reading Amadis de Gaule (which, God knows, wants much of a perfect poesy), have found their hearts moved to the exercise of courtesy, liberality, and especially courage. Who reads Aeneas carrying old Anchises on his back, that wishes not it were his fortune to perform so excellent an act? Whom do not those words of Turnus move, the tale of Turnus having planted his image in the imagination?

Fugientem haec terra videbit?
Usque adeone mori miserum est?

Where the philosophers, as they scorn to delight, so must they be content little to move, saving wrangling whether virtue be the chief or the only good, whether the contemplative or the active life do excel, which Plato and Boethius well knew and therefore made Mistress Philosophy very often borrow the masking raiment of poesy. For even those hard-hearted evil men who think virtue a school-name, and know no other good but *indulgere genio*, and therefore despise the austere admonitions of the philosopher, and feel not the inward reason they stand upon, yet will be content to be delighted, which is all the

good-fellow poet seems to promise ; and so steal to see the form of goodness (which seen, they cannot but love) ere themselves be aware, as if they took a medicine of cherries.

Infinite proofs of the strange effects of this poetical invention might be alleged ; only two shall serve, which are so often remembered as I think all men know them. The one of Menenius Agrippa, who, when the whole people of Rome had resolutely divided themselves from the senate, with apparent show of utter ruin, though he were, for that time, an excellent orator, came not among them upon trust either of figurative speeches or cunning insinuations, and much less with far-fetched maxims of philosophy, which (especially if they were Platonic), they must have learned geometry before they could well have conceived : but, forsooth, he behaves himself like a homely and familiar poet. He tells them a tale, that there was a time when all the parts of the body made a mutinous conspiracy against the belly, which they thought devoured the fruits of each other's labour ; they concluded they would let so unprofitable a spender starve. In the end, to be short—for the tale is notorious, and as notorious that it was a tale—with punishing the belly they plagued themselves. This, applied by him, wrought such effect in the people, as I never read that ever words brought forth but then so sudden and so good an alteration ; for upon reasonable conditions a perfect reconcilement ensued.

The other is of Nathan the prophet, who, when the holy David had so far forsaken God as to confirm adultery with murder, when he was to do the tenderest office of a friend, in laying his own shame before his eyes (sent by God to call again so chosen a servant), how does he it but by telling of a man whose beloved lamb was ungratefully taken from his bosom ? The application most divinely true, but the discourse itself feigned ; which made David (I speak of the second and instrumental cause) as in a glass to see his own filthiness, as that heavenly Psalm of Mercy well testifies.

By these, therefore, examples and reasons, I think it may be manifest that the poet, with that same hand of delight, does draw the mind more effectually than any other art does. And so a conclusion not unfitly ensues : that as virtue is the most excellent resting-place for all worldly learning to make his end of, so poetry, being the most familiar to teach it, and most princely to move towards it, in the most excellent work is the most excellent workman.

But I am content not only to decipher him by his works (although works in commendation or dispraise must ever hold a high authority), but more narrowly will examine his parts ;

so that, as in a man, though altogether may carry a presence full of majesty and beauty, perchance in some one defectious piece we may find a blemish.

Now in his parts, kinds, or species (as you list to term them), it is to be noted that some poesies have coupled together two or three kinds, as tragical and comical, whereupon is risen the tragi-comical ; some, in the like manner, have mingled prose and verse, as Sannazzaro and Boethius ; some have mingled matters heroical and pastoral ; but that comes all to one in this question, for, if severed they be good, the conjunction cannot be hurtful. Therefore, perchance forgetting some, and leaving some as needless to be remembered, it shall not be amiss in a word to cite the special kinds, to see what faults may be found in the right use of them.

Is it then the pastoral poem which is misliked ?—for perchance where the hedge is lowest they will soonest leap over. Is the poor pipe disdained, which sometimes out of Meliboeus' mouth can show the misery of people under hard lords and ravening soldiers, and again, by Tityrus, what blessedness is derived to them that lie lowest from the goodness of them that sit highest ? Sometimes, under the pretty tales of wolves and sheep, can include the whole considerations of wrong-doing and patience ; sometimes show that contention for trifles can get but a trifling victory ; where perchance a man may see that even Alexander and Darius, when they strave who should be cock of this world's dunghill, the benefit they got was that the after-livers may say :

Haec memini et victum frustra contendere Thyrsin ;
Ex illo Corydon, Corydon est tempore nobis.

Or is it the lamenting elegiac, which in a kind heart would move rather pity than blame ; who bewails, with the great philosopher Heraclitus, the weakness of mankind and the wretchedness of the world ; who surely is to be praised, either for compassionate accompanying just causes of lamentation, or for rightly painting out how weak be the passions of woefulness ?

Is it the bitter but wholesome iambic, who rubs the galled mind, in making shame the trumpet of villainy with bold and open crying out against naughtiness ?

Or the satiric ? Who
Omne vafer vitium ridenti tangit amico ;

who sportingly never leaves till he makes a man laugh at folly, and at length ashamed to laugh at himself, which he

cannot avoid without avoiding the folly ; who, while *circum praecordia ludit*, gives us to feel how many headaches a passionate life brings us to—how, when all is done,

Est Ulubris, animus si nos non deficit aequus.

No, perchance it is the comic ; whom naughty play-makers and stage-keepers have justly made odious. The argument of abuse I will answer after. Only thus much now is to be said, that the comedy is an imitation of the common errors of our life, which he represents in the most ridiculous and scornful sort that may be, so as it is impossible that any beholder can be content to be such a one. Now, as in geometry the oblique must be known as well as the right and in arithmetic the odd as well as the even ; so in the actions of our life who sees not the filthiness of evil, wants a great foil to perceive the beauty of virtue. This does the comedy handle so, in our private and domestical matters, as with hearing it we get, as it were, an experience what is to be looked for a niggardly Demea, of a crafty Davus, of a flattering Gnatho, of a vain-glorious Thraso ; and not only to know what effects are to be expected, but to know who be such, by the signifying badge given them by the comedian. And little reason has any man to say that men learn evil by seeing it so set out, since, as I said before, there is no man living, but by the force truth has in nature, no sooner sees these men play their parts, but wishes them *in pistrinum*, although perchance the sack of his own faults lie so behind his back, that he sees not himself to dance the same measure—whereto yet nothing can more open his eyes than to find his own actions contemptibly set forth.

So that the right use of comedy will, I think, by noboby be blamed, and much less of the high and excellent tragedy, that opens the greatest wounds, and shows forth the ulcers that are covered with tissue ; that makes kings fear to be tyrants, and tyrants manifest their tyrannical humours ; that with stirring the effects of admiration and commiseration teaches the uncertainty of this world, and upon how weak foundations gilden roofs are builded ; that makes us know :

Qui sceptra saevus duro imperio regit,
Timet timentes, metus in auctorem redit.

But how much it can move, Plutarch yields a not able testimony of the abominable tyrant Alexander Pheraeus ; from whose eyes a tragedy, well made and represented, drew abundance of tears, who without all pity had murdered infinite numbers, and some of his own blood ; so as he that was not ashamed to make matters for tragedies, yet could not resist the

sweet violence of a tragedy. And if it wrought no further good in him, it was that he, in despite of himself, withdrew himself from hearkening to that which might mollify his hardened heart. But it is not the tragedy they do mislike, for it were too absurd to cast out so excellent a representation of whatsoever is most worthy to be learned.

Is it the lyric that most displeases, who with his tuned lyre and well-accorded voice, gives praise, the reward of virtue, to virtuous acts ; who gives moral precepts and natural problems ; who sometimes raises up his voice to the height of the heavens, in singing the lauds of the immortal God ? Certainly I must confess mine own barbarousness ; I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet ; and yet it is sung but by some blind crowder, with no rougher voice than rude style ; which being so evil apparelled in the dust and cobwebs of that uncivil age, what would it work, trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar ? In Hungary I have seen it the manner at all feasts, and other such meeting, to have songs of their ancestors' valour, which that right soldier-like nation think the chiefest kindlers of brave courage. The incomparable Lacedaemonians did not only carry that kind of music ever with them to the field, but even at home, as much songs were made, so were they all content to be singers of them ; when the lusty men were to tell what they did, the old men what they had done, and the young men what they would do. And where a man may say that Pindar many times praises highly victories of small moment, matters rather of sport than virtue ; as it may be answered, it was the fault of the poet, and not of the poetry, so indeed the chief fault was in the time and custom of the Greeks, who set those toys at so high a price that Philip of Macedon reckoned a horse race won at Olympus among his three fearful felicities. But as the inimitable Pindar often did, so is that kind most capable and most fit to awake the thoughts from the sleep of idleness, to embrace honourable enterprises.

There rests the heroical, whose very name, I think, should daunt all backbiters. For by what conceit can a tongue be directed to speak evil of that which draws with it no less champions than Achilles, Cyrus, Aeneas, Turnus, Tydeus, Rinaldo ? Who does not only teach and move to a truth, but teaches and moves to the most high and excellent truth ; who makes magnanimity and justice shine through all misty fearfulness and foggy desires ; who, if the saying of Plato and Tully be true, that who could see virtue would be wonderfully ravished with the love of her beauty, this man sets her out to make her more lovely, in her holiday apparel, to the eye of any that will deign not to disdain until they understand. But if anything be

already said in the defence of sweet poetry, all concurred to the maintaining the heroical, which is not only a kind, but the best and most accomplished kind of poetry. For, as the image of each action stirs and instructs the mind, so the lofty image of such worthies most inflames the mind with desire to be worthy, and informs with counsel how to be worthy. Only let Aeneas be worn in the tablet of your memory, how he governs himself in the ruin of his country ; in the preserving his old father, and carrying away his religious ceremonies ; in obeying the gods' commandment to leave Dido, though not only all passionate kindness, but even the human consideration of virtuous gratefulness, would have craved other of him ; how in storms, how in sports, how in war, how in peace, how a fugitive, how victorious, how besieged, how besieging, how to strangers, how to allies, how to enemies, how to his own ; lastly, how in his inward self, and how in his outward government ; and I think, in a mind not prejudiced with a prejudicating humour, he will be found in excellency fruitful. Yea, even as Horace said, *melius Chrysippo et Crantore*. But, truly, I imagine it falls out with these poet-whippers as with some good women who often are sick, but in faith they cannot tell where. So the name of poetry is odious to them, but neither his cause nor effects, neither the sum that contains him nor the particularities descending from him, give any fast handle to their carping dispraise.

Since, then, poetry is of all human learnings the most ancient and of most fatherly antiquity, as from whence other learnings have taken their beginnings ; since it is so universal that no learned nation does despise it, nor no barbarous nation is without it ; since both Roman and Greek gave divine names unto it, the one of prophesying, the other of making, and that indeed that name of making is fit for him, considering that whereas other arts retain themselves within their subject, and receive, as it were, their being from it, the poet only, brings his own stuff, and does not learn a conceit out of a matter, but makes matter for a conceit ; since neither his description nor his end contains any evil, the thing described cannot be evil ; since his effects be so good as to teach goodness, and to delight the learners of it ; since therein (namely, in moral doctrine, the chief of all knowledges), he does not only far pass the historian, but for instructing is well nigh comparable to the philosopher, and for moving leaves him behind him ; since the Holy Scriptures (wherein there is no uncleanness), have whole parts in it poetical, and that even our Saviour Christ vouchsafed to use the flowers of it ; since all kinds are not only in their united forms, but in their several dissections fully commendable ; I think, and think I think rightly, the laurel crown appointed for

triumphing captains does worthily, of all other learnings, honour the poet's triumph.

But because we have ears as well as tongues, and that the lightest reasons that may be will seem to weigh greatly, if nothing be put in the counter-balance, let us hear, and, as well as we can, ponder, what objections be made against this art, which may be worthy either of yielding or answering.

First, truly, I note not only in these *misomousoi*, poet-haters, but in all that kind of people who seek a praise by dispraising others, that they do prodigally spend a great many wandering words in quips and scoffs, carping and taunting at each thing which, by stirring the spleen, may stay the brain from a through-beholding the worthiness of the subject. Those kind of objections, as they are full of a very idle easiness (since there is nothing of so sacred a majesty but that an itching tongue may rub itself upon it), so deserve they no other answer, but, instead of laughing at the jest, to laugh at the jester. We know a playing wit can praise the discretion of an ass, the comfortableness of being in debt, and the jolly commodity of being sick of the plague. So of the contrary side, if we will turn Ovid's verse :

Ut lateat virtus proximitate mali,

"that good lie hid in nearness of the evil," Agrippa will be as merry in showing the vanity of science, as Erasmus was in commending of folly ; neither shall any man or matter escape some touch of these smiling railers. But for Erasmus and Agrippa, they had another foundation than the superficial part would promise. Marry, these other pleasant fault-finders, who will correct the verb before they understand the noun, and confute others' knowledge before they confirm their own, I would have them only remember that scoffing comes not of wisdom ; so as the best title in true English they get with their merriments is to be called good fools, for so have our grave forefathers ever termed that humorous kind of jesters.

But that which gives greatest scope to their scorning humours is rhyming and versing. It is already said (and as I think truly said), it is not rhyming and versing that make poesy. One may be a poet without versing, and a versifier without poetry. But yet presuppose it were inseparable (as indeed it seems Scaliger judges), truly it were an inseparable commendation. For if *oratio* next to *ratio*, speech next to reason, be the greatest gift bestowed upon mortality, that cannot be praiseless which does most polish that blessing of speech ; which considers each word, not only (as a man may say), by his forcible quality, but by his best-measured

quantity; carrying even in themselves a harmony, without, perchance, number, measure, order, proportion be in our time grown odious.

But lay aside the just praise it has by being the only fit speech for music (music, I say, the most divine striker of the senses), thus much is undoubtedly true, that if reading be foolish without remembering, memory being the only treasurer of knowledge, those words which are fittest for memory, are likewise most convenient for knowledge. Now that verse far exceeds prose in the knitting up of the memory, the reason is manifest; the words (besides their delight, which has a great affinity to memory), being so set, as one cannot be lost but the whole work fails; which, accusing itself, calls the remembrance back to itself, and so most strongly confirms it. Besides, one word so, as it were, begetting another, as, be it in rhyme or measured verse, by the former a man shall have a near guess to the follower. Lastly, even they that have taught the art of memory have showed nothing so apt for it as a certain room divided into many places, well and thoroughly known; now that has the verse in effect perfectly, every word having his natural seat, which seat must needs make the word remembered. But what needs more in a thing so known to all men? Who is it that ever was a scholar that does not carry away some verses of Virgil, Horace, or Cato, which in his youth he learned, and even to his old age serve him for hourly lessons? As:

Percontatorem fugito, nam garrulus idem est.
Dum sibi quisque placet, credula turba sumus.

But the fitness it had for memory is notably proved by all delivery of arts, wherein, for the most part, from grammar to logic, mathematic, physic, and the rest, the rules chiefly necessary to be borne away are compiled in verses. So that verse being in itself sweet and orderly, and being best for memory, the only handle of knowledge, it must be in jest that any man can speak against it.

Now, then, go we to the most important imputations laid to the poor poets: for aught I can yet learn they are these.

First, that there being many other more fruitful knowledges, a man might better spend his time in them than in this.

Secondly, that it is the mother of lies.

Thirdly, that it is the nurse of abuse, infecting us with many pestilent desires, with a siren's sweetness drawing the mind to the serpent's tail of sinful fancies, and herein especially comedies give the largest field to ear, as Chaucer said; how, both in other nations and in ours, before

poets did soften us, we were full of courage, given to martial exercises, the pillars of manlike liberty, and not lulled asleep in shady idleness with poet's pastimes.

And, lastly and chiefly, they cry out with an open mouth, as if they had overshot Robin Hood, that Plato banished them out of his Commonwealth. Truly this is much, if there be much truth in it.

First, to the first; that a man might better spend his time is a reason indeed; but it does (as they say), but *petere principium.* For if it be, as I affirm, that no learning is so good as that which teaches and moves to virtue, and that none can both teach and move thereto so much as poesy, then is the conclusion manifest that ink and paper cannot be to a more profitable purpose employed. And certainly, though a man should grant their first assumption, it should follow (me thinks), very unwillingly, that good is not good because better is better. But I still and utterly deny that there is sprung out of earth a more fruitful knowledge.

To the second, therefore, that they should be the principal liars, I answer paradoxically, but truly, I think truly, that of all writers under the sun the poet is the least liar, and though he would, as a poet, can scarcely be a liar. The astronomer, with his cousin the geometrician can hardly escape when they take upon them to measure the height of the stars. How often, think you, do the physicians lie, when they aver things good for sicknesses, which afterwards send Charon a great number of souls drowned in a potion before they come to his ferry? And no less of the rest which take upon them to affirm. Now, for the poet, he nothing affirms, and therefore never lies. For, as I take it, to lie is to affirm that to be true which is false; so as the other artists, and especially the historian, affirming many things, can, in the cloudy knowledge of mankind, hardly escape from many lies. But the poet, as I said before, never affirms. The poet never makes any circles about your imagination, to conjure you to believe for true what he writes. He cites not authorities of other histories, but even for his entry calls the sweet muses to inspire into him a good invention; in truth, not labouring to tell you what is or is not, but what should or should not be And therefore, though he recount things not true, yet because he tells them not for true, he lies not; without we will say that Nathan lied in his speech, before alleged, to David; which, as a wicked man dare scarce say, so think I none so simple would say that Aesop lied in the tales of his beasts; for who thinks that Aesop wrote it for actually true, were well worthy to have his name chronicled among the beasts he writes of. What child is there that, coming to a play, and seeing Thebes written in great letters upon an old door, does believe that it is Thebes? If then a man can arrive, at that

child's age, to know that the poet's persons and doings are but pictures what should be, and not stories what have been, they will never give the lie to things not affirmatively, but allegorically and figuratively written. And therefore, as in history looking for truth, they may go away full-fraught with falsehood, so in poesy looking for fiction, they shall use the narration but as an imaginative ground-plot of a profitable invention. But hereto is replied that the poets give names to men they write of, which argues a conceit of an actual truth, and so, not being true, proves a falsehood. And does the lawyer lie then, when, under the names of John a Stile, and John a Noakes, he puts his case ? But that is easily answered. Their naming of men is but to make their picture the more lively, and not to build any history. Painting men, they cannot leave men nameless. We see we cannot play at chess but that we must give names to our chess-men ; and yet, me thinks, he were a very partial champion of truth that would say we lied for giving a piece of wood the reverend title of a bishop. The poet names Cyrus or Aeneas no other way than to show what men of their fames, fortunes, and estates should do.

Their third is, how much it abuses men's wit, training it to wanton sinfulness and lustful love. For indeed that is the principal, if not the only, abuse I can hear alleged. They say the comedies rather teach than reprehend amorous conceits. They say the lyric is larded with passionate sonnets, the elegiac weeps the want of his mistress, and that even to the heroical Cupid has ambitiously climbed. Alas ! Love, I would you could as well defend yourself as you can't offend others ! I would those on whom you do attend could either put you away, or yield good reason why they keep you ! But grant love of beauty to be a beastly fault (although it be very hard, since only man, and no beast has that gift to discern beauty) ; grant that lovely name of Love to deserve all hateful reproaches (although even some of my masters the philosophers spent a good deal of their lamp-oil in setting forth the excellency of it) ; grant, I say, whatsoever they will have granted that not only love, but lust, but vanity, but (if they list), scurrility, possesses many leaves of the poets' books ; yet think I, when this is granted, they will find their sentence may with good manners put the last words foremost, and not say that poetry abuses man's wit, but that man's wit abuses poetry. For I will not deny, but that man's wit may make poesy (which should be *eikastike*, which some learned have defined, figuring forth good things) to be *phantastike*, which does contrariwise infect the fancy with unworthy objects ; as the painter that should give to the eye either some excellent perspective, or some fine picture fit for building or fortification,

or containing in it some notable example, as Abraham sacrificing his son Isaac, Judith killing Holofernes, David fighting with Goliath, may leave those, and please an ill-pleased eye with wanton shows of better-hidden matters. But what! shall the abuse of a thing make the right use odious? Nay, truly, though I yield that poesy may not only be abused, but that being abused, by the reason of his sweet charming force, it can do more hurt than any other army of words, yet shall it be so far from concluding that the abuse should give reproach to the abused, that contrariwise it is a good reason, that whatsoever, being abused, does most harm, being rightly used —and upon the right use each thing receives his title—does most good. Do we not see the skill of physic (the best rampire to our often-assaulted bodies), being abused, teach poison, the most violent destroyer? Does not knowledge of law, whose end is to even and right all things, being abused, grow the crooked fosterer of horrible injuries? Does not (to go to the highest), God's word abused, breed heresy; and his name abused, become blasphemy? Truly a needle cannot do much hurt, and as truly, with leave of ladies be it spoken, it cannot do much good. With a sword you may kill your father, and with a sword you may defend your prince and country. So that, as in their calling poets the fathers of lies they say nothing, so in this their argument of abuse they prove the commendation.

They allege herewith, that before poets began to be in price our nation has set their hearts' delight upon action, and not upon imagination; rather doing things worthy to be written, than writing things fit to be done. What that before-time was, I think scarcely Sphinx can tell; since no memory is so ancient that has the precedence of poetry. And certain it is that, in our plainest homeliness, yet never was the Albion nation without poetry. Marry, this argument, though it be levelled against poetry, yet is it indeed a chainshot against all learning, or bookishness, as they commonly term it. Of such mind were certain Goths, of whom it is written that, having in the spoil of a famous city taken a fair library, one hangman (belike fit to execute the fruits of their wits), who had murdered a great number of bodies, would have set fire on it. "No," said another very gravely, "take heed what you do; for while they are busy about these toys, we shall with more leisure conquer their countries." This, indeed, is the ordinary doctrine of ignorance, and many words sometimes I have heard spent in it; but because this reason is generally against all learning, as well as poetry, or rather all learning but poetry; because it were too large a digression to handle, or at least too superfluous (since it is manifest that all government of action is to be gotten by knowledge, and knowledge best by gathering many knowledges, which is reading); I only, with Horace, to him that is of that opinion

Jubeo stultum esse libenter ;

for as for poetry itself, it is the freest from this objection, for poetry is the companion of the camps. I dare undertake, Orlando Furioso or honest King Arthur will never displease a soldier ; but the quiddity of *ens*, and *prima materia*, will hardly agree with a corselet. And therefore, as I said in the beginning, even Turks and Tartars are delighted with poets. Homer, a Greek, flourished before Greece flourished ; and if to a slight conjecture a conjecture may be opposed, truly it may seem, that as by him their learned men took almost their first light of knowledge, so their active men received their first motions of courage. Only Alexander's example may serve, who by Plutarch is accounted of such virtue, that Fortune was not his guide but his footstool ; whose acts speak for him, though Plutarch did not ; indeed the phoenix of war-like princes. This Alexander left his schoolmaster, living Aristotle, behind him, but took dead Homer with him. He put the philosopher Callisthenes to death, for his seeming philosophical, indeed mutinous, stubbornness ; but the chief thing he was ever heard to wish for was that Homer had been alive. He well found he received more bravery of mind by the pattern of Achilles, than by hearing the definition of fortitude. And therefore if Cato misliked Fulvius for carrying Ennius with him to the field, it may be answered that if Cato misliked it, the noble Fulvius liked it, or else he had not done it. For it was not the excellent Cato Uticensis (whose authority I would much more have reverenced) ; but it was the former, in truth a bitter punisher of faults, but else a man that had never well sacrificed to the Graces. He misliked and cried out upon all Greek learning ; and yet, being fourscore years old, began to learn it, belike fearing that Plato understood not Latin. Indeed, the Roman laws allowed no person to be carried to the wars but he that was in the soldiers' roll. And therefore though Cato misliked his unmustered person, he misliked not his work. And if he had, Scipio Nasica, judged by common consent the best Roman, loved him. Both the other Scipio brothers, who had by their virtues no less surnames than of Asia and Africa, so loved him that they caused his body to be buried in their sepulchre. So as Cato his authority being put against his person, and that answered with so far greater than himself, is herein of no validity.

But now, indeed, my burden is great, that Plato his name is laid upon me, whom, I must confess, of all philosophers I have ever esteemed most worthy of reverence ; and with great reason, since of all philosophers he is the most poetical. Yet if he will defile the fountain out

of which his flowing streams have proceeded, let us boldly examine with what reasons he did it.

First, truly, a man might maliciously object that Plato, being a philosopher, was a natural enemy of poets. For, indeed, after the philosophers had picked out of the sweet mysteries of poetry the right discerning true points of knowledge, they forthwith, putting it in method, and making a school-art of that which the poets did only teach by a divine delightfulness, beginning to spurn at their guides, like ungrateful prentices were not content to set up shops for themselves, but sought by all means to discredit their masters; which by the force of delight being barred them, the less they could overthrow them the more they hated them. For, indeed, they found for Homer seven cities strave who should have him for their citizen; where many cities banished philosophers, as not fit members to live among them. For only repeating certain of Euripides' verses, many Athenians had their lives saved of the Syracusans when the Athenians themselves thought many philosophers unworthy to live. Certain poets as Simonides and Pindar, had so prevailed with Hiero the First, that of a tyrant they made him a just king; where Plato could do so little with Dionysius, that he himself of a philosopher was made a slave. But who should do thus, I confess, should requite the objections made against poets with like cavillations against philosophers; as likewise one should do that should bid one read Phaedrus or Symposium in Plato, or the Discourse of Love in Plutarch, and see whether any poet do authorize abominable filthiness, as they do.

Again, a man might ask out of what commonwealth Plato did banish them. In fact, thence where he himself allows community of women. So as belike this banishment grew not for effeminate wantonness, since little should poetical sonnets be hurtful when a man might have what woman he listed. But I honour philosophical instructions, and bless the wits which bred them, so as they be not abused, which is likewise stretched to poetry. Saint Paul himself, who yet, for the credit of poets, alleged twice two poets, and one of them by the name of a prophet, set a watchword upon philosophy—indeed upon the abuse. So does Plato upon the abuse, not upon poetry. Plato found fault that the poets of his time filled the world with wrong opinions of the gods, making light tales of that unspotted essence, and therefore would not have the youth depraved with such opinions. Herein may much be said; let this suffice: the poets did not induce such opinions, but did imitate those opinions already induced. For all the Greek stories can well testify that the very religion of that time stood upon many and many-fashioned gods; not taught so by the poets, but followed according to their nature of imitation. Who list may read in Plutarch the discourses of Isis and Osiris, of the cause

why Oracles ceased, of the Divine Providence, and see whether the theology of that nation stood not upon such dreams, which the poets indeed superstitiously observed ; and truly (since they had not the light of Christ), did much better in it than the philosophers, who, shaking off superstition, brought in atheism.

Plato therefore (whose authority I had much rather justly construe than unjustly resist), meant not in general of poets, in those words of which Julius Scaliger said, *Qua authoritate barbari quidam atque hispidi abuti velint ad poetas e' republica exigendos* ; but only meant to drive out those wrong opinions of the Deity (whereof now, without further law, Christianity has taken away all the hurtful belief), perchance (as he thought), nourished by the then esteemed poets. And a man need go no further than to Plato himself to know his meaning ; who, in his dialogue called Ion, gives high and rightly divine commendation unto poetry. So as Plato, banishing the abuse, not the thing, not banishing it, but giving due honour unto it, shall be our patron and not our adversary. For, indeed, I had much rather (since truly I may do it), show their mistaking of Plato, under whose lion's skin they would make an ass-like braying against poesy, than go about to overthrow his authority ; whom, the wiser a man is, the more just cause he shall find to have in admiration ; especially since he attributes unto poesy more than myself do, namely to be a very inspiring of a divine force, far above man's wit as in the aforenamed dialogue is apparent.

Of the other side, who would show the honours have by the best sort of judgement granted them, a whole sea of examples would present themselves : Alexanders, Caesars, Scipios, all favourers of poets ; Laelius, called the Roman Socrates, himself a poet, so as part of *Heautontimoroumenon* in Terence was supposed to be made by him. And even the Greek Socrates, whom Apollo confirmed to be the only wise man, is said to have spent part of his old time in putting Aesop's Fables into verses ; and therefore full evil should it become his scholar, Plato, to put such words in his master's mouth against poets. But what needs more ? Aristotle writes the Art of Poesy ; and why, if it should not be written ? Plutarch teaches the use to be gathered of them ; and how, if they teach the use to be gathered of them ; and how, if they should not be read ? And who reads Plutarch's either history or philosophy, shall find he trims both their garments with guards of poesy. But I list not to defend poesy with the help of her underling historiography. Let it suffice that it is a fit soil for praise to dwell upon ; and what dispraise may set upon it, is either easily overcome, or transformed into just commendation.

So that, since the excellences of it may be so easily and so justly confirmed, and the low-creeping objections so soon trodden down : it not being an art of lies, but of true doctrine ; not of effeminateness, but of notable stirring of courage ; not of abusing man's wit, but of strengthening man's wit ; not banished, but honoured by Plato ; let us rather plant more laurels for to engarland our poets' heads (which honour of being laureate, as besides them only triumphant captains were, is a sufficient authority to show the price they ought to be held in), than suffer the ill-savoured breath of such wrong speakers once to blow upon the clear springs of poesy.

But since I have run so long a career in this matter, methinks, before I give my pen a full stop, it shall be but a little more lost time to inquire why England, the mother of excellent minds, should be grown so hard a stepmother to poets, who certainly in wit ought to pass all others, since all only proceed from their wit, being indeed makers of themselves, not takers of others. How can I but exclaim.

Musa, mihi causas memora, quo numine laeso ?

Sweet poesy ! that has anciently had kings, emperors, senators, great captains, such as, besides a thousand others, David Adrian, Sophocles, Germanicus, not only to favour poets, but to be poets ; and of our nearer times can present for her patrons a Robert, King of Sicily ; the great King Francis of France ; King James of Scotland ; such cardinals as Bembus and Bibbiena ; such famous preachers and teachers as Beza and Melancthon ; so learned philosophers as Fracastorius and Scaliger ; so great orators as Pontanus and Muretus ; so piercing wits as George Buchanan ; so grave counsellors as, besides many, but before all, that Hospital of France, than whom, I think, that realm never brought forth a more accomplished judgement more firmly built upon virtue ; I say these, with numbers of others, not only to read others' poesies but to poetize for others' reading. That poesy, thus embraced in all other places, should only find in our time a hard welcome in England, I think the very earth laments it, and therefore decks our soil with fewer laurels than it was accustomed. For heretofore poets have in England also flourished ; and, which is to be noted, even in those times when the trumpet of Mars did sound loudest. And now that an over-faint quietness should seem to strew the house for poets, they are almost in as good reputation as the mountebanks at Venice. Truly even that, as of the one side it gives great praise to poesy, which, like Venus (but to better purpose), has rather be troubled in the net with Mars, than enjoy the homely quiet of Vulcan ; so serves it for a piece of a reason why they are

less grateful to idle England, which now can scarce endure the pain of a pen. Upon this necessarily follows, that base men with servile wits undertake it, who think it enough if they can be rewarded of the printer. And so as Epaminondas is said, with the honour of his virtue to have made an office, by his exercising it, which before was contemptible, to become highly respected ; so these men, no more but setting their names to it, by their own disgracefulness disgrace the most graceful poesy. For now, without any commission, they do post over the banks of Helicon, till they make the readers more weary than post-horses ; while, in the meantime, they,

Queis meliore luto finxit praecordia Titan,

are better content to suppress the outflowing of their wit than, by publishing them, to be accounted knights of the same order.

But I that, before ever I dare aspire unto the dignity, am admitted into the company of the paper-blurrers, do find the very true cause of our wanting estimation is want of desert, taking upon us to be poets in despite of Pallas. Now wherein we want desert were a thankworthy labour to express ; but if I knew, I should have mended myself. But I, as I never desired the title, so have I neglected the means to come by it ; only, overmastered by some thoughts, I yielded an inky tribute unto them. Marry, they that delight in poesy itself should seek to know what they do and how they do ; and especially look themselves in an unflattering glass of reason, if they be inclinable unto it. For poesy must not be drawn by the ears, it must be gently led, or rather it must lead ; which was partly the cause that made the ancient learned affirm it was a divine gift, and no human skill, since all other knowledges lie ready for any that has strength of wit ; a poet no industry can make if his own genius be not carried unto it. And therefore is it an old proverb : *Orator fit, poeta nascitur.* Yet confess I always that, as the fertilest ground must be manured, so must the highest-flying wit have a Daedalus to guide him. That Daedalus, they say, both in this and in other, has three wings to bear itself up into the air of due commendation : that is, art, imitation, and exercise. But these, neither artificial rules nor imitative patterns, we much cumber ourselves withal. Exercise indeed we do, but that very fore-backwardly, for where we should exercise to know, we exercise as having known ; and so is our brain delivered of much matter which never was begotten by knowledge. For, there being two principal parts, matter to be expressed by words, and words to express the matter, in neither we use art or imitation rightly. Our matter is *quodlibet* indeed, though wrongly performing Ovid's verse,

Quicquid conabar dicere, versus erat ;

never marshalling it into an assured rank, that almost the readers cannot tell where to find themselves.

Chaucer, undoubtedly, did excellently in his *Troylus and Cresseid*, of whom, truly, I know not whether to marvel more, either that he in that misty time could see so clearly, or that we in this clear age walk so stumblingly after him. Yet had he great wants, fit to be forgiven in so reverent antiquity. I account the *Mirrour of Magistrates* meetly furnished of beautiful parts ; and in the Earl of Surrey's *Lyrics* many things tasting of a noble birth, and worthy of a noble mind. The *Sheapheard's Kalender* has much poetry in his eclogues, indeed worthy the reading, if I be not deceived. That same framing of his style to an old rustic language I dare not allow, since neither Theocritus in Greek, Virgil in Latin, nor Sannazzaro in Italian did affect it. Besides these, I do not remember to have seen but few (to speak boldly) printed, that have poetical sinews in them ; for proof whereof, let but most of the verses be put in prose, and then ask the meaning, and it will be found that one verse did but beget another, without ordering at the first what should be at the last ; which becomes a confused mass of words, with a tinkling sound of rime, barely accompanied with reason.

Our tragedies and comedies not without cause cried out against, observing rules neither of honest civility nor of skilful poetry : excepting *Gorboduck* (again I say of those that I have seen), which notwithstanding as it is full of stately speeches and well-sounding phrases, climbing to the height of Seneca his style, and as full of notable morality, which it does most delightfully teach, and so obtain the very end of poesy ; yet in truth it is very defectious in the circumstances ; which grieves me, because it might not remain as an exact model of all tragedies. For it is faulty both in place and time, the two necessary companions of all corporal actions. For where the stage should always represent but one place, and the uttermost time presupposed in it should be, both by Aristotle's precept and common reason, but one day, there is both many days and many places inartificially imagined.

But if it be so in *Gorboduck*, how much more in all the rest ? Where you shall have Asia of the one side, and Africa of the other, and so many other under-kingdoms, that the player, when he comes in, must ever begin with telling where he is, or else the tale will not be conceived. Now you shall have

three ladies walk to gather flowers, and then we must believe the stage to be a garden. By and by we hear news of shipwreck in the same place, and then we are to blame if we accept it not for a rock. Upon the back of that comes out a hideous monster with fire and smoke, and then the miserable beholders are bound to take it for a cave. While in the meantime two armies fly in, represented with four swords aud bucklers, and then what hard heart will not receive it for a pitched field ?

Now of time they are much more liberal. For ordinary it is that two young princes fall in love ; after many traverses, she is got with child, delivered of a fair boy, he is lost, grows a man, falls in love, and is ready to get another child, and all this in two hours' space ; which how absurd it is in sense, even sense may imagine, and art has taught, and all ancient examples justified, and at this day the ordinary players in Italy will not err in. Yet will some bring in an example of Eunuchus in Terence, that contains matter of two days, yet far short of twenty years. True it is, and so was it to be played in two days, and so fitted to the time it set forth. And though Plautus have in one place done amiss, let us hit with him, and not miss with him. But they will say, how then shall we set forth a story which contains both many places and many times ? And do they not know that a tragedy is tied to the laws of poesy, and not of history ; not bound to follow the story, but having liberty either to feign a quite new matter, or to frame the history to the most tragical conveniency ? Again, many things may be told which cannot be showed, if they know the difference betwixt reporting and representing. As for example I may speak (though I am here), of Peru, and in speech digress from that to the description of Calicut ; but in action I cannot represent it without Pacolet's horse. And so was the manner the ancients took, by some *Nuntius* to recount things done in former time or other place.

Lastly, if they will represent an history, they must not (as Horace said), begin *ab ovo* but they must come to the principal point of that one action which they will represent. By example this will be best expressed. I have a story of young Polydorus, delivered for safety's sake, with great riches, by his father Priamus to Polymnestor, King of Thrace, in the Trojan war time. He, after some years, hearing the overthrow of Priamus, for to make the treasure his own murders the child ; the body of the child is taken up ; Hecuba, she, the same day, finds a sleight to be revenged most cruelly of the tyrant. Where now would one of our tragedy-writers begin, but with the delivery of the child ? Then should he sail over into Thrace, and so spend I know not how many years, and travel numbers of places. But where does Euripides ? Even with the finding of the body,

leaving the rest to be told by the spirit of Polydorus. This needs no further to be enlarged; the dullest wit may conceive it.

But, besides these gross absurdities, how all their plays be neither right tragedies nor right comedies, mingling kings and clowns, not because the matter so carried it, but thrust in the clown by head and shoulders to play a part in majestical matters, with neither decency nor discretion; so as neither the admiration and commiseration, nor the right sportfulness, is by their mongrel tragi-comedy obtained. I know Apuleius did somewhat so, but that is a thing recounted with space of time, not represented in one moment; and I know the ancients have one or two examples of tragi-comedies, as Plautus has *Amphitryo*. But, if we mark them well, we shall find that they never, or very daintily, match hornpipes and funerals. So falls it out that, having indeed no right comedy in that comical part of our tragedy, we have nothing but scurrility, unworthy of any chaste ears, or some extreme show of doltishness, indeed fit to lift up a loud laughter, and nothing else; where the whole tract of a comedy should be full of delight, as the tragedy should be still maintained in a well-raised admiration.

But our comedians think there is no delight without laughter, which is very wrong; for though laughter may come with delight, yet comes it not of delight, as though delight should be the cause of laughter; but well may one thing breed both together. Nay, rather in themselves they have, as it were, a kind of contrariety. For delight we scarcely do, but in things that have a conveniency to ourselves, or to the general nature; laughter almost ever comes of things most disproportioned to ourselves and nature. Delight has a joy in it either permanent or present; laughter has only a scornful tickling. For example, we are ravished with delight to see a fair woman, and yet are far from being moved to laughter. We laugh at deformed creatures, wherein certainly we cannot delight. We delight in good chances, we laugh at mischances. We delight to hear the happiness of our friends and country, at which he were worthy to be laughed at that would laugh. We shall, contrarily, laugh sometimes to find a matter quite mistaken and go down the hill against the bias, in the mouth of some such men, as for the respect of them one shall be heartily sorry, yet he cannot choose but laugh, and so is rather pained than delighted with laughter. Yet deny I not but that they may go well together. For as in Alexander's picture well set out we delight without laughter, and in twenty mad antics we laugh without delight; so in Hercules, painted, with his great beard and furious countenance, in woman's attire, spinning at Omphale's commandment, it breeds both

delight and laughter ; the representing of so strange a power in love procures delight, and the scornfulness of the action stirs laughter.

But I speak to this purpose, that all the end of the comical part be not upon such scornful matters as stir laughter only, but mixed with it that delightful teaching which is the end of poesy. And the great fault, even in that point of laughter, and forbidden plainly by Aristotle, is that they stir laughter in sinful things, which are rather execrable than ridiculous ; or in miserable, which are rather to be pitied than scorned. For what is it to make folks gape at a wretched beggar or a beggarly clown, or, against law of hospitality, to jest at strangers because they speak not English as well as we do ? What do we learn ? Since it is certain :

Nil habet infelix paupertas durius in se,
Quam quod ridiculos homines facit.

But rather a busy loving courtier ; a heartless threatening Thraso ; self-wise seeming schoolmaster ; a wry-transformed traveller ; these if we saw walk in stage-names, which we play naturally, therein were delightful laughter and teaching delightfulness, as in the other, the tragedies of Buchanan do justly bring forth a divine admiration.

But I have lavished out too many words of this play-matter. I do it, because, as they are excelling parts of poesy, so is there none so much used in England, and none can be more pitifully abused ; which, like an unmannerly daughter, showing a bad education, causes her mother Poesy's honesty to be called in question.

Other sorts of poetry almost have we none, but that lyrical kind of songs and sonnets, which, Lord, if he gave us so good minds, how well it might be employed, and with how heavenly fruit both private and public, in singing the praises of the immortal beauty, the immortal goodness of that God who gives us hands to write, and wits to conceive !—of which we might well want words, but never matter : of which we could turn our eyes to nothing, but we should ever have new-budding occasions.

But truly, many of such writings as come under the banner of unresistible love, if I were a mistress would never persuade me they were in love ; so coldly they apply fiery speeches, as men that had rather read lovers' writings (and so caught up certain swelling phrases, which hang together like a man which once told me the wind was at north-west and by south, because he would be sure to name winds enough), than that in truth they feel those passions ; which easily, as I think, may be betrayed by that same forcibleness, or *energeia* (as the Greeks call it) of the writer.

But let this be a sufficient, though short note, that we miss the right use of the material point of poesy.

Now for the outside of it, which is words, or (as I may term it) diction, it is even well worse ; so is that honey-flowing matron, Eloquence, apparelled, or rather disguised, in a courtesan-like painted affection : one time with so far-fetched words, they may seem monsters, but must seem strangers, to any poor Englishman ; another time with coursing of a letter, as if they were bound to follow the method of a dictionary ; another time with figures and flowers extremely winter-starved.

But I would this fault were only peculiar to versifiers, and had not as large possession among prose-printers, and (which is to be marvelled), among many scholars, and (which is to be pitied), among some preachers. Truly I could wish—if at least I might be so bold to wish in a thing beyond the reach of my capacity—the diligent imitators of Tully and Demosthenes (most worthy to be imitated) did not so much keep Nizolian paper-books of their figures and phrases, as by attentive translation, as it were, devour them whole, and make them wholly theirs. For now they cast sugar and spice upon every dish that is served to the table ; like those Indians, not content to wear ear-rings at the fit and natural place of the ears, but they will thrust jewels through their nose and lips, because they will be sure to be fine. Tully, when he was to drive out Catiline as it were with a thunderbolt of eloquence, often used that figure of repetition, as *Vivit, Vivit ? Immo in senatum venit*, etc. Indeed inflamed with a well-grounded rage, he would have his words, as it were, double out of his mouth ; and so do that artificially, which we see men in choler do naturally. And we, having noted the grace of those words, hale them in sometime to a familiar epistle, when it were too much choler to be choleric. How well store of *similiter cadences* does sound with the gravity of the pulpit. I would but invoke Demosthenes' soul to tell, who with a rare daintiness uses them. Truly they have made me think of the sophister that with too much subtlety would prove two eggs three, and though he might be counted a sophister, had none for his labour. So these men bringing in such a kind of eloquence, well may they obtain an opinion of a seeming fineness, but persuade few, which should be the end of their fineness.

Now for similitudes, in certain printed discourses, I think all herbarists, all stories of beasts, fowls, and fishes are rifled up, that they come in multitudes to wait upon any of our conceits, which certainly is as absurd a surfeit to the ears as is possible. For the force of a similitude not being to prove anything to a contrary disputer, but only to explain to a willing

hearer; when that is done, the rest is a most tedious prattling, rather overswaying the memory from the purpose whereto they were applied, than any whit informing the judgement, already either satisfied or by similitudes not to be satisfied.

For my part, I do not doubt, when Antonius and Crassus, the great forefathers of Cicero in eloquence, the one (as Cicero testifies of them) pretended not to know art, the other not to set by it, because with a plain sensibleness they might win credit to popular ears, which credit is the nearest step to persuasion, which persuasion is the chief mark of oratory—I do not doubt, I say, but that they used these knacks very sparingly; which who does generally use any man may see does dance to his own music, and so be noted by the audience more careful to speak curiously than to speak truly. Undoubtedly (at least to my opinion undoubtedly), I have found in divers small-learned courtiers a more sound style than in some professors of learning; of which I can guess no other cause, but that the courtier following that which by practice he finds fittest to nature, therein though he know it not, does according to art, though not by art; where the other using art to show art and not to hide art (as in these cases he should do), flies from nature, and indeed abuses art.

But what! methinks I deserve to be pounded for straying from poetry to oratory. But both have such an affinity in this wordish consideration, that I think this digression will make my meaning receive the fuller understanding: which is not to take upon me to teach poets how they should do, but only, finding myself sick among the rest, to show some one or two spots of the common infection grown among the most part of writers; that, acknowledging ourselves somewhat awry, we may bend to the right use both of matter and manner: whereto our language gives us great occasion, being, indeed capable of any excellent exercising of it.

I know some will say it is a mingled language. And why not so much the better, taking the best of both the other? Another will say it wants grammar. Nay, truly, it has that praise that it wants not grammar: for grammar it might have, but it needs it not; being so easy in itself, and so void of those cumbersome differences of cases, genders, moods, and tenses, which, I think, was a piece of the Tower of Babylon's curse, that a man should be put to school to learn his mother tongue. But for the uttering sweetly and properly the conceits of the mind, which is the end of speech, that has it equally with any other tongue in the world; and is particularly happy in compositions of two or three words together—near the Greek, far beyond the Latin, which is one of the greatest beauties can be in a language.

Now of versifying there are two sorts, the one ancient, the other modern. The ancient marked the quantity of each syllable, and according to that framed his verse ; the modern observing only number, with some regard of the accent, the chief life of it stands in that like sounding of the words, which we call rhyme. Whether of these be the more excellent would bear many speeches ; the ancient no doubt more fit for music, both words and tune observing quantity ; and more fit lively to express divers passions, by the low or lofty sound of the well-weighed syllable. The latter likewise with his rhyme strikes a certain music to the ear ; and, in fine, since it does delight, though by another way, it obtains the same purpose ; there being in either sweetness, and wanting in neither, majesty. Truly the English, before any other vulgar language I know, is fit for both sorts. For, for the ancient, the Italian is so full of vowels that it must ever be cumbered with elisions ; the Dutch so, of the other side, with consonants, that they cannot yield the sweet sliding fit for a verse. The French in his whole language has not one word that has his accent in the last syllable saving two, called antepenultima, and little more has the Spanish ; and therefore very gracelessly may they use dactyls. The English is subject to none of these defects. Now for rhyme, though we do not observe quantity, yet we observe the accent very precisely, which other languages either cannot do, or will not do so absolutely. That caesura, or breathing-place in the midst of the verse, neither Italian nor Spanish have, the French and we never almost fail of.

Lastly, even the very rhyme itself the Italian cannot put in the last syllable, by the French named the masculine rhyme, but still in the next to the last, which the French call the female, or the next before that, which the Italians term *sdrucciola*. The example of the former is *buono, suono* ; of the *sdrucciola* is *femina, semina.* The French, of the other side, has both the male as *bon, son* ; and the female, as *plaise, laise* ; but the *sdrucciola* he has not. Where the English has all three, as *due, true* ; *father, rather* ; *motion, potion*, with much more which might be said, but that already I find the triflingness of this discourse is much too much enlarged.

So that since the ever praiseworthy poesy is full of virtue-breeding delightfulness, and void of no gift that ought to be in the noble name of learning : since the blames laid against it are either false or feeble ; since the cause why it is not esteemed in England is the fault of poet-apes, not poets ; since lastly, our tongue is most fit to honour poesy, and to be honoured by poesy ; I conjure you all that have had the evil luck to read this ink-wasting toy of mine, even in the name of the Nine Muses, no more to scorn the sacred mysteries of poesy ; no more to laugh at the name of poets, as though they

were next inheritors of fools; no more to jest at the reverend title of "a rhymer"; but to believe, with Aristotle, that they were the ancient treasurers of the Grecians' divinity; to believe, with Bembus, that they were first bringers-in of all civility; to believe, with Scaliger, that no philosopher's precepts can sooner make you an honest man than the reading of Virgil; to believe, with Clauserus, the translator of Cornutus, that it pleased the Heavenly Diety by Hesiod and Homer, under the veil of fables, to give us all knowledge, logic, rhetoric, philosophy natural and moral, and *quid non*? To believe, with me, that there are many mysteries contained in poetry which of purpose were written darkly, lest by profane wits it should be abused; to believe, with Landino, that they are so beloved of the gods, that whatsoever they write proceeds of a divine fury; lastly, to believe themselves, when they tell you they will make you immortal by their verses.

Thus doing, your name shall flourish in the printers' shops. Thus doing, you shall be of kind to many a poetical preface. Thus doing, you shall be most fair, most rich, most wise, most all; you shall dwell upon superlatives. Thus doing, though you be *libertino patre natus*, you shall suddenly grow *Herculea proles*.

Si quid mea carmina possunt.

Thus doing, your soul shall be placed with Dante's Beatrix, or Virgil's Anchises.

But if—fie of such a but!—you be born so near the dullmaking cataract of Nilus, that you cannot hear the plant-like music of poetry; if you have so earth-creeping a mind that it cannot lift itself up to look to the sky of poetry, or rather, by a certain rustical disdain, will become such a mome as to be a *Momus* of poetry; then, though I will not wish unto you the ass's ears of Midas, nor to be driven by a poet's verses, as Bubonax was, to hang himself; nor to be rhymed to death, as is said to be done in Ireland; yet thus much curse I must send you in the behalf of all poets: that while you live you live in love, and never get favour, for lacking skill of a sonnet; and when you die, your memory die from the earth, for want of an epitaph.

9

Annotations

Lines 1 to 20

Edward Wotton : The elder brother of Sir Henry Wotton ; son of Thomas Wotton of Bocton Malherbe. 'Sir Edward was knighted by Queen Elizabeth, and made Comptroller of her Majesty's Household. He was—saith Camden—a man remarkable for many and great employments in the State, during her reign, and sent several times *Ambassador* into foreign nations. After her death, he was by King James made Comptroller of his Household, and called to be of his Privy Council, and by him advanced to be Lord Wotton, Baron of Merley in Kent, and made Lord Lieutenant of that County.' He was an intimate friend of Sir Philip Sidney.

At the Emperor's court : In the autumn of 1573 Sidney left Paris after the Bartholomew Massacre and went to Heidelberg and Frankfort. At the latter town he made the acquaintance of Hubert Languet, whom in November 1573, he accompanied to Vienna, whither Languet, was going as envoy of the Elector of Saxony to the Emperor Maximilian II (1564—1576).

Horsemanship : A practised horseman. Sidney was deeply interested in its theory ("contemplations").

John Pietro Pugliano : An Italian Equerry of the Emperor, famous in his day as a teacher of those elaborate evolutions and feats of horsemanship which were thought not only necessary for soldiers, but an important part of the education of a gentleman.

Esquire : Equerry (officer in charge of stables).

Wit : Understanding.

Contemplations : Theoretical studies.

Admiration : Amazement or wonder. Cf. Hamlet : "Season your admiration for a while."

Faculty : Branch of learning.

Estate : Order of men.

Masters of War : Best skilled in war.

Abiders : Stayers ; those who stay.

Strong abiders : Courageous in holding their ground.

Unbelieved : Incredible.

Bred such wonder to a prince : Caused a Prince to be so muc admired.

Pedanteria : Pedantry ; superficial or school learning.

The only serviceable courtier without flattery : The only attentive and useful courtier.

Lines 21 to 40

A piece of a logician : Somewhat of a logician. Though Sidney took no degree at Oxford, he was well trained in the logic of the day, and held a formal disputation there in the presence of his uncles Lord Warwick and Lord Leicester. He was at Christ Church, 1568-1571.

Am provoked : 'Provoked' here implies 'challenged'. Sidney refers especially to the attack upon dramatic poetry by Gosson in his *The Schoole of Abuse* published in 1579 and dedicated to Sidney himself ; but, as we shall see, Gosson represented a growing feeling of suspicion of poetry, especially dramatic poetry, which towards the end of the century was openly and violently expressed by the Puritans.

My unelected vocation : Which I did not choose for myself.

That followed the steps of his master : Sidney seems to have in his mind the text. The disciple is not greater than his master ; it is sufficient for the disciple that he be as his master. But it is not clear whether there is any definite reference to any one as his 'master' in poetry.

A pitiful defence : A defence appealing to pity.

Fallen to be the laughing-stock of children : The low reputation into which poetry has fallen alluded to by writers of the age.

The former : i.e. learning. And yet, according to Puttenham and others, learning generally was in equal disrepute with poetry.

Silly : Here means 'simple'. The word has gone through a process of deterioration in meaning similar to that of innocent.

Even the names of philosophers : Sidney refers especially to the usual instance of Plato's adverse sentence on poetry, to which he recurs more than once and undertakes to answer formally later in this tractate.

Defacing : Defaming ; dishonouring.

Lines 41 to 60

First light-giver to ignorance : The same point is laboured by Puttenham in his *Arts of English Poesie*, Ch. IV., which is headed 'How poets were the first Philosophers, the first Astronomers and Historiographers and Orators and Musicians of the World.' Spingarn maintains that this passage strikes the keynote of the Renaissance theory of poetry.

Play the hedgehog : The reference is to the fable of the hedgehog and the snake. The hedgehog hibernates in any hole, such as the burrow of a rabbit.

The vipers : Another piece of that fanciful or mythological nature history which is so common in the Elizabethan writers. Viper implies an image of ingratitude.

Musaeus : Pupil of Orpheus, the legendary pre-Homeric Greek poet.

Hesiod : The eighth century Greek poet ; the author of *Works and Days*, *Shield of Hercules*, and *Theogonia*.

Orpheus : Thracian bard in Greek mythology. He was the teacher of religious rites and mysteries ; he was the bard who accompanied the Argo, and the poems ascribed to him are often referred to by Plato. According to legends he had the power to charm even trees and rocks and journeyed to Hades to recover his dead wife Eurydice.

Linus : He was the son of Apollo, and one of the Muses. He too was a legendary Greek poet.

Challenge to be : Claim to be.

Charming sweetness : The sweet music which charmed, or even enchanted.

Wild untamed wits : Uncivilized human beings.

Lines 61 to 80

Amphion : Son of Zeus and Antiope, received a lyre from Hermes, on which he played with such skill that the stones moved of their own accord to form the walls of Thebes.

Indeed stony and beastly people : 'Beastly' means 'beastlike', like wild animals, uncultured and uncivilised. Stony implies hard-hearted.

Livius Andronicus : A Greek by birth and originally a slave. He received the name of Livius from the master who manumitted him (set him free). He was also the first to introduce at Rome Latin translations of Greek plays.

Ennius : He was the author of a famous Epic on the History of Rome which he called, *Annales*, as well as of Tragedies and Comedies. He is described as the father of Latin poetry. No complete work of his is extant.

Science : Knowledge ; it was not, as in the modern usage, confined almost exclusively to the natural sciences.

Dante : Dante Durante Alighieri born at Florence in 1265 ; banished from Florence in 1300 ; died at Ravenna in Sept. 1321. During his banishment he wrote the *Divina Comedia*, ranked among the greatest poems of the world.

Boccaccio : (1313-1375). He is chiefly known now for his Romances in the collection called *Il Decamerone*, first printed in 1471.

Sidney has mentioned the three men who more than any others influenced the form of literature, not only in England but throughout Europe, in the 15th and 16th centuries. He then goes on to mention the English poets who first received and transmitted that influence.

Petrarch : (1306-74) The greatest Italian poet after Dante. His writings both in Latin and Italian are very numerous ; but to us, he is known as the father of the sonnet.

Gower : John Gower (1340-1408). He was a contemporary of Chaucer and the author of *Confessio Amantis*.

Foregoing : Example ; precedent.

Thales, Empedocles, and Parmenides : Early philosophers and poets of Greece According to the popular story Empedocles put an end to his life by throwing himself down the crater of Mt. Etna.

Pythagoras : A great Greek mathematician and philosopher (582-507 B.C.). Nearly every branch of learning and philosophy is attributed to him. In the eyes of his disciples he was divinely inspired and the founder of ascetic mysteries.

Phocylides (560-500 B.C.) and *Tyrtaeus* (about B.C. 668) : They were what were called gnomic poets, who put moral or political maxims into verse for the purposes of practical exhortations or instruction. The latter was famous for his warlike songs.

Solon : Athenian legislator and one of the Seven Wise Men. He is supposed to have written an epic on *Atlantis*, the vanished continent introduced by Plato in his *Critias*.

Their delightful vein : Their natural talent for producing that which gives pleasure.

Lines 81 to 100

Honest : Respectable ; conveying a notion of commonplace or inferior intellect. *Burgesses* : Citizens.

That, if they had been set on the rack : Sidney means that the language put in the mouths of the speakers in Plato's *Dialogues* was such as they could not have been used, and that therefore the whole is a creation of the author's and as such a species of poetry.

The delicacy of a walk : The delightfulness of a walk.

Gyges' Ring : 'It is the story of the Lydian shepherd and his ring, which being turned one way made him invisible, and the other way visible. Whereupon he contrived to be sent to the king on a message, intrigued with the queen, and, conspiring with her, killed the king and seized the crown'. Gyges' Ring was actually a magic ring found by the shepherd in the underworld.

Apollo's garden : Apollo was the Greek god of poets. Thus a collection of poetry of the day was called 'Apollo's garland'.

Historiographers : Sidney uses both the longer Greek term, as well as the shorter 'historian' which eventually supplanted it.

Fashion : Manner ; form. *Weight* : Authority.

Herodotus : (484-425 B. C.) Greek historian, called, "father of history". His history was divided into nine books named after nine Muses, the Greek Goddesses of learning.

Of : Here 'of' implies 'from'.

Passionate : 'Moving', from the sense of the passions ; 'the feelings'.

Lines 101 to 120

Judgements : Understanding. *Into the gates...judgements* : Into popular approval.

Turkey : By *law-giving Divines* Sidney means the Turkish Doctors or *Muftis*, who wrote in a mixture of Turkish and Arabic.

Areytos : The word *Areytos* is defined in Minsheu's Spanish Dictionary as 'a kind of dance among the Indians' ; it seems to be a West-Indian word adopted and modified by the Spaniards.

Lines 121 to 140

Some of whom : Edward I, for instance ; Read Gray's poem *The Bard.*

Stand upon their authorities : 'Stay to consider'. Cp. Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 3, 4, 119 : "Stand not upon the order of your going."

But even so far : If only so far.

Vates : In Latin, the word means 'prophet'.

Vaticinium and vaticinari : 'A prophecy' and 'to prophecy'.

Sortes Virgilianae : The oracle of Virgil. The word *sortes* was applied to oracular responses, as one of the methods of obtaining them by drawing lots. The use of *Sortes Virgilianae* was a plan for obtaining a quasi-oracular response by opening a book of Virgil and regarding the first verse which met the eyes as containing an intimation of fate.

Albinus : Governor of Britain in 192 A. D. He was killed in battle in A.D. 197. He foolishly rebelled against the Roman Emperor, Septimius Severus.

Lines 141 to 160

Arma amens : ' Distractedly do I take up arms ; but little purpose is there in arms" (Aeneid, II. 314).

And in his age performed. it : When Septimius Severus was proclaimed Emperor by the troops in Illyricum and Albinus resisted, and with an army of 150,000 men met Severus at Lyons on the 19th Feb. 197, and was eventually defeated and killed.

Charms : 'Charm' originally meant 'incantation'.

Oracles of Delphos : The name of the place is Delphi, not Delphos, but Sidney always writes Delphos, and so do other writers

of the age. Strabo tells us that at Delphi the priestess gave out the oracular reply, which the prophets then caused to be reduced to verse by some 'poets' kept on the premises for that purpose. At any rate most of the answers from Delphi preserved by Herodotus are in verse.

Sibylla's prophecies : There were many Sibyllae or wise women in various places ; but Sidney is thinking of Sibylla of Cumae in Champania, who was said to have given the remains of her book of prophecies (after sundry refusals) to Tarquinius King of Rome.

Conceit : Imagination ; idea.

Reasonableness of this word vates : Justification of calling a poet a vates, i.e., a prophet.

The name Psalms : One hundred fifty poetic hymns, generally ascribed to the Jewish King David and constituting a part of the *Old Testament*, famous for their literary excellence and devotional intensity.

Songs: Psalm originally meant the song which was meant to be sung to the accompaniment of the Greek Musical instrument *psalterion*.

Hebricians : Hebrew scholars.

His handling his prophecy : The manner in which he treats his prophecy.

Merely poetical : Entirely poetical.

Lines 161 to 180

Changing of persons : i.e. putting the words dramatically now into the mouth of one person and now in that of another.

Prosopopoeia : Personification ; representing things as living persons.

Poesy : By 'poesy' Sidney did not mean poetry or poem, but the very art or craft of making poetry.

Everlasting beauty : The 'true' and 'divine' beauty celebrated by Plato in *Symposium* and elsewhere.

A Poet : A maker. Ben Jonson, in his *Discoveries*, says that 'a Poet is that which by the Greeks is called, a maker or feigner.'

Poiein : The Greek verb meaning 'to make'. *Met with* : Agreed with ; coincided with.

A maker : Chaucer and Spenser use 'to make' in the sense of 'to write verse'.

Scope : Aim ; object.

Lines 181 to 200

His : In modern language we should say *its*.

What order nature has taken therein : 'To take order', is 'to take measures' ; 'to make arrangements'.

Nature : Means the created world.

Stands upon the natural virtues, vices : Is engaged in studying ; is concerned with studying.

Follow nature : The stoic definition of the *summum bonum* in Ethics was to 'live according to Nature'. Pope's connotation of the term 'nature' was entirely different from that of Wordsworth's.

Therein : i.e., in virtues, vices and passions.

Which still are compassed......proposed matter : Sidney (who is here following Julius Scaliger's *Poetice*) means that the orator must confine himself to subjects on which he is required to speak, the historian to the facts as he finds them ; neither *create*, they only deal with what they find existing ; their rules therefore are not of universal application or absolute, but are limited to the matter with which they are dealing. The poet, on the other hand, creating his own matter, is unconfined.

The metaphysic : The metaphysician is concerned with how 'realities' exist in man's mind ; but Sidney adds, such abstract and second notions derive from first notions (reality), so that, basically, the metaphysician is also dependent upon 'nature'.

Second and abstract notions : The concept not of concrete object but of genus, species etc.

Lines 201 to 220

Supernatural : Referring to the meaning of the word 'metaphysics' meaning 'beyond nature'.

Only the poet : Sidney, in these lines, sets forth his view of poetry. Poetry is imitation of Nature, not in the usual sense of copying but in the technical sense of idealization of Nature. He borrows this view from Aristotle. According to Aristotle poetry is not imitation but imaginative reconstruction of life.

Another nature : The creative or the inventive faculty of the poet, who from his 'esemplastic imagination' creates a new world—a world that is entirely different from this world of reality.

Cyclops : Creatures with circular eyes ; in Homer, a race of one-eyed giants of Cicily.

Chimeras : A fabulous fire-breathing monster. (Figuratively, the word implies 'an absurd creation of the imagination')

Furies : In classical mythology, the three goddesses of revenge and punishment.

Not enclosed......her gifts : Not confined to things or powers really existing in nature, i.e., he can invent powers, forms and qualities as he chooses.

Zodiac: Zone of the heavens (divided into twelve sections or signs such as Aries, Taurus, etc. The entire nature is supposed to be confined within this circle and all the planets, including sun and moon, move within this circle.

Her world......golden : The alchemy of poetic inspiration turns all that is dross into pure gold.

Brazen......golden : Refers to the gold, silver, bronze and iron ages of the poets.

For whom : For whose advantage or use. *Cunning* : Skill. *Theagenes* : The hero of Heliodorus's love story of Theagenes and Chariclea told in his *Aethiopica*.

Pylades : Pylades is the friend of Orestes and follows him when driven by the furies of his slaughtered mother.

Orlando : The hero of Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, the model of a valiant knight. The Ariosto (1474-1533) was very popular at this time, though it does not appear to have been translated into English until 1591 (by John Harrington).

Xenophon's Cyrus : Cyrus was known as Cyrus the great ; he was the founder of the Persian empire. Xenophon was the disciple of Socrates and a great historian of Greece, who presents Cyrus as an idealized character, a model of statesmanship and valour in his historical novel, "Education of Cyrus". This book was written in the 4th century B.C. It is the earliest specimen of political romance.

Virgil's Aeneas : The legendary Trojan prince who escaped from the burning Troy, reached Carthage where he captivated Dido, the Queen. In odedience to the warning of the gods, he left Carthage and finally reached Rome. Virgil celebrates his great exploits and wanderings in his classical Epic *Aeneid*.

Lines 221 to 240

Jestingly conceived : Taken as said in jest. *Conceive* : Understand.

Essential : In accordance with the facts of existence. Essential here means 'founded on truth'.

Any understanding : Anyone who is intelligent.

That idea, or fore-conceit : The term 'idea' is used here in the Platonic sense of "eternally existing pattern of which material objects are imperfect copies". The poet, in Sidney's view, is fortunate enough to dwell in the trans-celestial region of ideas; this enables him, in Wordsworth's phrase, "to see into the life of things".

Not wholly imaginative : Not merely as mental images, and hence unsubstantial.

Heavenly Maker : God. *That maker* : The poet, Xenophon.

Second nature : Man is the first nature; the second nature consists of the rest of the creation placed under man's dominion.

A divine breath : Inspiration. *Her* : Nature's.

Erected wit : Elevated, undebased intelligence.

Lines 241 to 260

Infected will : Corrupted and weakened will.

The name above all names : i.e. the maker. *Opening* : Exposition.

For so Aristotle termed it : Sidney follows Aristòtle both in his definitions and in his divisions of the various kinds of poetry; but his immediate authority appears rather to have been the *Poetice* of J. C. Scaliger (published in 1561), in which much the same method of arrangement is followed.

Mimes's : The famous definition of poetry by Aristotle. Poetry is *mimesis* (imitation) of nature and has been variously interpreted; it, of course, does not mean a photographic representation of nature.

Counterfeiting : Representing as if by a picture.

Speaking picture : Poetry and Picture are arts of a like nature; and both are busy about imitation. It was excellently said of Plutarch that Poetry was a speaking picture, and Picture a mute poesy.

Poesy, therefore...to teach and delight : Sidney is again following Scaliger. Sidney's definition of poetry is mainly derivative. He makes his debt to Aristotle clear enough. What is significant, however, is Sidney's insight which enables him to understaad the implications of Aristotle's mimetic theory of poetry (which, in itself, is Aristotle's attempt at answering Plato).

"As for the aim of poetry, 'to teach and delight', Sidney is indebted to Horace just as he is primarily indebted to Horace for his definition of poetry as 'a speaking picture'. It must be remembered that Aristotle never laid stress on the didactic element in art. Horace, however, did. But though he seems to lean slightly towards the teaching aspect of poetry, he clearly and categorically states that poetry is to delight as well. Once again, the attitude of Horace is one of sane compromise" (V. Chatterjee).

Three several kinds : After J. C. Scaliger, Sidney divides poetry into (i) religious, (ii) philosophical, and (iii) poetry of man.

Solomon : Son of David and King of Hebrews. Several books of the Bible are ascribed to him. He is traditionally known as a man of great wisdom and the husband of many wives.

Moses and Deborah : Prophets.

Job : A book of Old Testament in the form of a dramatic dialogue. It deals with the problem of good and evil in the world.

Emanuel Tremellius and Franciscus Junius : Two learned Hebraists, whose Latin translation of the Bible, first published at Frankfort in 1575-1580, was widely used.

Lines 261 to 280

The Holy Ghost : The Holy spirit or God who is supposed to have inspired the poetic books of the Bible.

Wrong divinity : From the view-point of Christianity. *Homer* : Homer, the writer of the two great classical epics, *Iliad and Odyssey*, is also supposed to have written a few hymns.

St. James his counsel : "Is any among you afflicted ? Let him pray. Is any merry ? Let him sing psalms" (Epistle V : 13).

Tyrtaeus : Tyrtaeus is classed as a moral poet, as being political ; and political science is a branch of moral philosophy, according to Scaliger.

Cato : Dionysus Cato, the reputed author of a small volume consisting of four books of *disticha* or couplets of Latin hexameters, containing moral precepts epigrammatically expressed.

Lucretius : Titus Lucretius Carus (B. C. 95-55) whose philosophical poem *de rerum natura* survives.

Georgies : A pastoral poem of Virgil in praise of rural life, inspired by Hesiod.

Manilius : He probably flourished in the reign of Tiberius and was the author of a poem on astronomy in five books called *Astronomica*.

Pontanus : John Jovius Pontanus (1420-1503) was one of the best of the mediaeval Latin poets of Italy. His famous astronomical poem is called *Urania*.

Lucan : Marcus Annaeus Lucanus (A. D. 39-65), the Roman poet put to death by Nero. His poem the *pharsalia* is an account of the civil war of Caesar and Pompey.

Which who mislike : Which those who mislike.

This second sort : i.e. the philosophical poets.

Is wrapped within......proposed subject : i.e. they are confined to the facts of the subject of which they are treating. *Constant* : Unwavering.

Indeed right poets : Who are without doubt real poets, i.e. imaginative poets, who are not tied to any particular class of facts.

Lines 281 to 300

Betwixt whom and these second : The second sort of poets (or painters) are necessarily minor artists, because they copy out particular things for their own sake, unlike the third category who invent new 'ideas'. A true poet or a painter thinks Sidney can never be content with merely holding up "the mirror up to nature".

Wit : Intellect or imagination.

Lucretia : Lucretia, wife of L. Tarquinius Collatinus, who killed herself after the violence done her by Sextus.

For these third : These poets, the 'right' ones, idealists as they are, do not represent things as they are, but as they ought to be. They are more concerned with the probable and desirable than with the merely possible. Aristotle refers to the poets' recourse to the law of probability or necessity in connexion with his point that "poetry tends to express the universal, history the particular" (Poetics).

These : The right kind of poets.

The first......poets : Religious poets.

Waited on : Associated with ; are greeted with.

Do merely make to imitate : Are entirely creative. That is, they have recourse to their creative imagination and are not concerned with the so-called facts. *Make* : Compose poetry.

Lines 301 to 320

Scope : Aim or object.

Want there not : There is no lack of.

Denominations : There was no fixed division of genres or literary types and different critics had their own individual groupings. Sidney has arranged the forms according to their importance and it is notable that the lyric comes second in the list, preceding even the tragic. After all Sidney himself was essentially a lyrist.

Iambic : Bitter satirical poetry written in iambs.

Numberous : Metrical.

Verse being but an ornament : Sidney's view that verse or metre is not essential to poetry was not widely current in his own days, though he might have found indirect support for his view in no less a critic than Aristotle. Sidney might have been influenced in this by Castelvetro as well. In latter times, Sidney's view had powerful champions in Wordsworth and Shelley, though Coleridge opposed it vehemently.

No cause to poetry : Not in any way essential to poetry.

Effigiem justi imperii : The representation of a just government.

As Cicero said : In his letter to his brother Quintus Cicero wrote : "The Cyrus of Xenophon is written, not in accordance with the truth of history, but to exhibit the portraiture of a just empire."

Absolute : Perfect ; pure. *Sugared* : Sweet ; delightful.

Lines 321 to 340

Right describing note : The distinguishing feature of poetry.

Passed all in all : Surpassed all things in all matters. That is, the subjects of which poets treat are the highest, so their manner of expressing themselves is to be the best.

As in matter.........beyond them : As poetry is superior to everything else in subject matter, similarly it should surpass everything else in the way or style it is expressed.

Table-talk fashion : Casually ; in a careless language.

Peizing : Weighing. Besides being accurate in his choice of words, the poet is also appropriate. He is very meticulous in observing the rules of 'decorum' and those of prosody. *His* : Its. *Anatomies* : Analyses. *Sentence* : Judgment. *Wit* : Intellect.

Enabling : Strengthening. *Conceit* : Imagination.

The final end......degenerate souls : All learning aims at inspiring people to know and achieve perfection. Absolute perfection is not for man to achieve, victim as he is of the "original sin" of Adam as well as a body of flesh and blood. But that is no reason why man should not try his best to achieve the maximum possible degree of perfection.

Clayey lodgings : Sinful bodies.

Lines 341 to 360

Inclination : Natural bent of mind.

Many-formed : Diverse ; manifold ; various.

Having this scope : Aiming to achieve knowledge, and through, an elevation of the mind.

Dungeon of the body : Cicero speaks of the soul from the dungeon (prison) of the body. Cp. Wordsworth's

Shades of the prison-house begin to close
About the growing body.

His : Its ; the mind's.

His own divine essence : The spiritual elements of which the soul itself is composed.

Balance : Test ; that which weighs everything as in scales.

Serving sciences : 'Subordinate sciences', only ministering to the chief science (Architektonike) greater than themselves : what Lord Brooke calls instrumental following arts.

A private end : A separate end or object. Thus the 'end' of oratory is persuasion, the end of Geometry is the measurement of dimensions but the end of all sciences alike is the supreme one of knowledge.

Architektonike : The master-knowledge, that which leads to and makes possible the highest end or aim—right action; for the end is action, and not mere knowing. The term denotes the chief-knowledge, the knowledge absolute to which everything else is subordinate.

Stands in : Consists in.

In the ethic and politic consideration : 'In regard to his moral and social duties', or 'considered as a moral or social being'.

Lines 361 to 380

Next end : Immediate object.

Faculty : 'Art' or 'profession'.

So : Similarly. *That* : viz, virtuous action.

Ending end : Final or supreme end ; the *summum bonum* of ethics.

Casting largess : 'Largess' is a word used at tournaments and still employed in various parts of the country by labourers after harvest. 'Casting largess' here implies scattering a liberal supply.

Definitions, Divisions, and Distinctions : Important devices of mediaeval logic. *Soberly* : Gravely.

Lines 381 to 400

Cumbersome : Embarrassing. *The generalities...specialities etc.* : i.e. the general category under which virtue or vice come, such as 'the good' or 'the bad' 'the profitable'or 'the unprofitable' : and the specific results of the two, such as pleasure, pain, honour, disgrace.

Little world : Microcosm

But that he......denies, in a great chafe : Refuses, in a great state of heat (excitement) to admit that.

Old mouse-eaten records : The modern usage is moth-eaten. Sidney is perhaps thinking of the line of Juvenal.

Partiality : The favourable and biased reports given by historians of their favourite rulers and statesmen. *Chafe* : irritation.

Lines 401 to 420

Testis temporum : Quotation from Cicero's *De Oratore* : "History is the evidence of time, the light of truth, the life of memory, the directress of life, and the messenger of antiquity."

A disputative virtue : 'A theoretical virtue' such as is defined in philosophical discussion. *Dangerless* : Peaceful.

Marathon : The place in the north-east of Athens where Plato taught and where the Athenians defeated the Persian invaders in 400 B.C.

Pharsalia : The ancient city of Greece, near which Caesar routed Pompey in 48 B. C. and became all powerful in Rome.

Poitiers : West of France where, in 1936, John II, King of France, was defeated and captured by Edward the black Prince.

Agincourt : A village of France, where the English King Henry V routed the French in 1415. *Goes beyond* : Excels ; surpasses.

Fine witted : Subtle.

I put the learner's hand to the lute : I (the historian) persuade the learner actually to perform acts of virtue, only the theoretical knowledge of which is supplied by the philosopher.

Allege : Give. *Conferring story by story* : Bringing together s tories after stories.

Brutus : (85-42 B.C.) Marcus Brutus, the assasin of Julius Caesar, was a great student of history, and is said by Plutarch to have been engaged on his Compendium of Polybius in his tent on the evening before the battle of Pharsalia.

Alphonsus of Aragon : (1396-1458) A notable patron of the arts with a special liking for Livy's histories, who is said to have cured himself from sickness by studying the deeds of Alexander the great.

Their disputation : The quarrel between the poet and the philosopher.

Makes a point : Comes to a stop.

Stands for : Is concerned with.

Moderator : A technical word (still in use) for the umpire or arbitrator in disputations in the universities between the challenger and defender.

Lines 421 to 440

The title : The highest form of learning or the highest form in the school of learning.

To carry the title : To win the title.

Serving sciences : Being of use to various branches of knowledge.

Divine : i.e. divine knowledge ; theology.

Jus : Latin *jus* means 'law', 'right' ; whence we have the English word 'justice.'

Formidine poenae : From fear of punishment.

Virtutis amore : From love of virtue.

Him : The lawyer.

These : The poet, historian and the philosopher.

Naughtiness : Wickedness.

Cabinet : Chamber : *Manners* : Morals.

Lines 441 to 460

Misty to be conceived : Difficult to be understood.

Wade in him : Go through the difficult task of reading his books.

Stands so upon : Deals so much with.

Not to the general reason of things : What is called 'philosophical history' was perhaps unknown in English, the chronicles dealing almost exclusively in a record of facts ; but ancient historians, especially Polybious, had made a great point of discovering and setting forth the ultimate causes of events.

Lines 461 to 480

Wordish : Consisting of words.

Most exquisitely : Most minutely.

The architecture : An architectural plan or drawing. It may also stand for architect.

By rote : By heart. *Conceit* : Idea.

Judicial : Sidney uses in the sense of judicious.

A judicial comprehending : Such a conception as enables the mind to form a judgement.

Tully : Marcus Tullius Cicero (106-43 B.C.) the distinguished Roman Orator and master of Latin prose.

Lines 481 to 500

Anchises : Trojan prince who enjoyed the favour of Venus.

Ulysses : When the Ulysses reached the nymph Calypso's island, she received him lovingly and wanted him to stay with her, which he refused to do out of his love for his island home of Ithaca.

The Stoics : A school of philosophy founded by Zeno of Citium. The Stoics advocated the control of all passions, including anger.

Short madness : According to Horace anger is a short madness.

Let but Sophocles......killing : In the play of Sophocles, the celebrated tragic dramatist of Greece, Ajax is only brought on the stage after the slaughter of the sheep and oxen. His violence is described by his wife. But Sidney is thinking of the play as a poem rather than of its actual representation on the stage.

Ajax : After the death of Achilles, his armour was handed over to Ulysses, and this drove him to madness. He slaughtered a flock of sheep taking them to be the sons of Atreus.

Schoolmen : Christian philosophers of the Middle Ages. *His* : Its ; of anger.

Genus and difference : 'Genus' is the class to which any species belongs ; 'difference' is the feature which distinguishes one species from the other.

Temperance in Ulysses : In the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* Ulysses is the embodiment of caution and wisdom. Diomedes and Achilles are the bravest warriors in the *Iliad*.

Nisus and Euryalus : Virgil's *Aeneid* is based on the theme of the well-known episode of the death and friendship of Nisus and Euryalus.

An apparent shining : A brilliant light or illustration.

Oedipus : Son of Laius, King of Thebes and Jocasta. His father was informed by an Oracle, that this child was so inauspiciously born that he would kill his own father and marry his own mother. Though hung to a tree, in order to be done away with, the child was saved by a shepherd and when he came of age, he, out of sheer ignorance, killed his father and married his mother. When later on he discovered the truth, he tore out his eyes and his mother committed suicide.

Atreus : According to Greek legend, he was the son of Pelops and king of Argos. The legend has it that he served up his brother's children at a banquet prepared for his brother Thyestes.

The two Theban brothers : The two sons of Oedipus from his mother, named Etcocles and Polyneices. They banished their blind

father and then fought against each other to become the sole ruler of Thebes and died in the battle.

Oedipus......Agamemnon...Atreus...the two Theban brothers : Sidney is evidently referring not to the plays of Sophocles and Aeschylus, but to those of Seneca. one of which called *Thyestes*, is concerned with the horrible story of Atreus serving upto his brother Thyestes a banquet of Thyestes' own sons. The other plays of Seneca referred to are the 'Agamemnon', the 'Oedipus' and the 'Thebais'. Atreus is called *self-devouring* apparently as equivalent to 'cannibal'.

The sour-sweetness of revenge in Medea : Here again Sidney probably knew the Medea of Seneca rather than that of Euripides. Medea kills her children to punish her husband Jason for deserting her and marrying a Greek wife, and secures the death of the bride.

Terentian Gnatho : Gnatho is a parasite and flatterer in the Eunuchus of Terence. His name is synonymous for the qualities of such persons by Cicero and others.

Chaucer's Pandar : In the 'Troylus and Cresseyde' (about 1382) which was taken from the *Filostrato* of Boccaccio. The word has become a by-word for a go-between.

States : The general shapes by which these virtues etc. may be remembered more easily.

See through them : Understand them thoroughly.

Lines 501 to 520

More's Utopia : Sir Thomas More (1478-1535) was a great English statesman and humanist. He authored the famous Romance, *Utopia*, a Latin Essay modelled on Plato's *Republic*. Utopia, which means 'Nowhere land' contains the description of an ideal commonwealth, with its laws, usages, religion and manners, meant of course as a satire on the state of things existing in England and other European countries at this time : and this satiric motive somewhat excludes it from the category of prose poems in which Sidney classes it, as he seems indeed to feel.

Mediocribus......columnae : Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 372-73 : "Neither men nor gods nor booksellers condone mediocrity in poets."

Dives and Lazarus : 'Dives' in Latin means 'a man' and has come to be used generically for 'rich man'. 'Lazarus' is the sore-stricken beggar in St. Luke.

The lost child : The Prodigal Son.

Lines 521 to 540

Abraham : The Hebrew patriarch, figures largely in Arabian, and Mohammedan legends. *Abraham's bosom* : It stands for 'heaven', regarded as a reward for the virtuous.

Divines : Theologians. *Acts* : Records.

Parables : Stories designed to teach moral lessons. *Obscurely* : Vaguely

Right : Real. *Aesop's tales* : Aesop was a Thracian slave of the 6th century B. C. The collection of fables that go by his name are none of them really his, though they may be founded on some that were genuine.

Formal : Only in external form.

Formal tales of beasts : Tales of persons in the form or shape of beasts.

Fantastically : From fancy or imagination. *Aristotle* : See *Poetics*, Chap. IX.

Lines 541 to 560

Imposed names : Names given to fictitious characters.

Alcibiades : Athenian statesman.

Vespasian's picture : Vespasian was a square-built man with an expression of intense effort in his face. T. F. S. Vespasian was the Emperor of Rome from 70 to 79 A. D.

Doctrinable : Instructive.

Lines 561 to 580

Justin : Well-known Roman historian.

The right Aeneas in Dares Phrygius : i.e. the historical Aeneas as described in the history of the Trojan war by Dares Phrygius. The name of Dares the Phrygian is connected with a curicus literary forgery There was an ancient tradition of the existence of an *Iliad*, earlier than that of Homer ; it was called the Phyrgian *Iliad*, and was believed to have been the work of Dares who in Homer's *Iliad* is mentioned as a priest of Hephaestus in Troy.

Fashion her countenance......grace : Have her face painted with the most handsome features.

Canidia : Canidia is the old witch of Horace's *Epodes* ; 3, 5 and 17.

Ill-favoured : Ugly.

Tantalus : The grandfather of Atreus. He served up the flesh of his son Pelops to the gods. He was punished by Zeus, and put in Hades to suffer a perpetual hunger and thirst in the sight of food and water, which always retreated from his lips ; and by having a huge rock above his head always on the point of falling.

Cannot......of : Is not at liberty (unless he resorts to poetic devices) to give.

Alexander : Alexander the Great (356-323 B. C.).

Scipio : May mean either Scipio Africanus the elder, the conqueror of Hannibal (B. C. 234-183), or his nephew or adoptive grandson the younger Africanus who destroyed Carthage in B. C. 146.

Quintus Curtius : Nothing is known of the age of Quintus Curtius Rufus, who wrote a history of Alexander the Great founded on the accounts of that King's contemporaries.

In universal......doctrine : If we regard its power of giving lessons of general application.

Does warrant......follow : Makes a man feel more certain as to what step he is to take. To warrant means to give a feeling of security.

If he......that was : If he deals only with what has been. *That* : That which.

Lines 581 to 600

A gross conceit : A dull imagination.

Only Informs......likelihood : Gives form to that which may be conjectured to be likely and nothing more.

As he is to frame : Inasmuch as it is his business to suit his example to general principles of probability. That is, the poet can conduct his story according to the rules of right or wrong, and can indulge in poetic justice, while in history this regular course of events is interrupted by good or ill-luck.

But if he......most reasonable : But if a person can realize that the historian's example offers only a conjecture as to what is likely to happen, and if he is guided by reason, he has to admit that the poet is superior to the historian in so far as the poet formulates his example in consonance with reason.

Poetically : Through the prompting of imagination.

Zopyrus : See Herodotus. History III. 183.

Darius : Darius I, King of Persia (521-485 B. C.). It was in his time that the great war between the Persians and the Greeks began.

Tarquinius : Tarquinius Piscus and Tarquinius Superbus (6th century B. C., the sixth and seventh legendary Kings of Rome of Etruscan origin. They were known as Tarquins. The former was a popular king, but the latter turned out to be a despot. Romans rose in revolt against him, resulting in his expulsion from Rome.

Lines 601 to 620

Abradates : The story is actually related by Xenophon about Araspes, king of Medes. Sidney seems to be a little confused here.

Subject to the poet : The poet is always capable of improving upon historical fact.

List : (archaic) Like ; desire. *Which* : As to which.

Success : Here it means 'result'. *As* : Although.

Lines 621 to 640

As the tragedy writer answered : As Euripides is said to have replied to someone who found fault with his Ixion as an impious and abominable character. "Yes, but I did not take him off the stage until I had riveted him to his wheel."

Manacled : Chained.

Miltiades : The Athenian general and victor of the battle of Marathon.

Phocion : A famous Athenian statesman was put to death as a traitor in B. C. 319 by a popular vote on the ground of his having helped Nicanor to seize the Peiraeus in the interests of Cassander. 'But', says Plutarch, 'after a short interval, taught by facts what a master and champion of virtue and justice the people had lost, they set up a bronze statue of him, and give his bones a public funeral while they condemned his accusers to death.

Accomplished : Finished or perfect, not quite in the modern sense.

Socrates : The great Greek philosopher was condemned and executed in B. C. 399 on the charges of corrupting the Athenian youth and teaching disbelief in the national gods.

The cruel Severus : Septimius Severus, Roman Emperor A. D. 193-211, reigned for 18 years. He was a man of great ability, and, when not irritated by personal opposition, a good and moderate monarch.

Excellent Severus : Alexander Severus, Roman Emperor, A. D. 222-235, was murdered along with his mother by rebel soldiers.

Sylla : Lucius Cornelius Sylla, was a Roman dictator and an embittered opponent of Consul Caius Marius. Both were notorious for their cruelty, but they lived long.

Marius : Caius Marius had also been the author of terrible proscriptions, whereby the partisans of Sylla were put to death in B. C. 87. He too died a natural death while he was 71, while he was actual Consul.

Pompey : Roman general and a member of the first triumvirate was murdered in the boat in which he was trying to land in Egypt in his flight after being defeated by Caesar at Pharsalia, B. C. 48.

Cicero : The famous Roman Orator was killed near his villa by the soldiers of Mark Antony.

Sidney means that in spite of their virtuous lives, these men were reduced to such straits that they would have been thankful if they could only have been allowed to live in exile, but that they had not even that good fortune.

Cato : M. Porcius Cato, the younger committed suicide as he did not want to submit to Caesar.

Rebel Caesar : Julius Caesar, the Dictator (B. C. 100-44) is called 'rebel' because by entering Italy at the head of troops in B. C. 49 he broke the law, which forbade a Proconsul to leave the province, and thus put himself in hostility to the Senate.

His name : That is 'Kaiser', still used as the title of the emperor.

Lines 641 to 660

To put down......tyranny : When he resigned his dictatorship.

Literas nescivit : Was ignorant of letters (therefore did not know how to dictate). Sylla showed ignorance of literature in laying down his dictatorship.

By Poetry : Of poetry.

New punishments......tyrants : Sidney may have been thinking of Virgil who places among the damned the establishers of tyranny.

Occidendos esse : That they (tyrants) are to be slain. Perhaps Sidney is referring to Seneca who says that if every other method of converting tyrants fails the only remedy is death.

Cypselus, Periander : Cypselus and his son Periander were both tyrants of Corinth (655-625 B. C. and 625-585 B. C.). Though Sidney adopts the common account of their cruelty, Aristotle asserts that their reigns were notable for their law abiding and popular character.

Phalaris : Sicilian ruler, (570-554 B. C.) who used to burn his victims alive. He had a brazen bull in which his victims were roasted.

Dionysius : Tyrant of Syracuse from about B. C. 406 to 367. His son, the younger Dionysius, reigned from 367 to 343 B. C., when he was driven out and returned to Corinth.

Kennel : Pack of hounds.

Setting it forward : Inciting it.

Lines 661 to 680

Philophilosophos : Fond of philosophers.

In moving : In respect of their power of affecting the mind.

Gnosis : Knowledge.

Praxis : Action.

By-turnings : Wrong words. Hence the term 'by walkers' for sinners or dishonest persons.

Painfulness : Diligence ; the taking of pains.

Lines 681 to 700

Words of Art : Technical terms of philosophy.

Natural conceit : Instinctive knowledge.

Out of natural conceit : Here it means 'from ideas implanted by nature'.

Hoc opus etc. : This is toil, this is labour. (*Aenied* VI. 38)

Human : Not divine sciences.

Lines 701 to 720

Pretending no more : Pretending only to tell a pleasant and plain tale.

Aloes or Rhubarb : Two bitter purgatives.

Hercules : A popular Greek hero.

They be...again : Were again being treated as school boys.

Valour : Value or worth.

Whereof poetry is : To which poetry belongs.

Has the most conveniency to nature : Best harmonises with nature. Conveniency means propriety.

As Aristotle says : In the fourth part of *Poetics*, Aristotle says : "These are things which are disagreeable to us in real life, and yet their likenesses presented with the utmost exactness give us pleasure to look at : as, for instance, shapes of the lowest animals and of dead bodies."

Amadis de Gaule : A new era of romance began with Amadis de Gaule, derived as some have wrongly thought from a French metrical original, but certainly written in Portugal.

Lines 721 to 740

Words of Turnus : Though regarded as a brave soldier, Turnus, king of Tutuli, was ultimately slain by Aeneas.

Fugientem haec etc. : "Shall this land see Turnus a fugitive ? Is it, after all, so pitiful a thing to die." (*Aeneid* XII)

Saving wrangling : Confining themselves to empty discussion, or to noisy disputes.

Boethius : M. S. Boethius (A. D. 470-524), the last of the classical writers, was famous for his beneficence and learning, especially his learning in classical philosophy. His chief work *Consalatio Philosophiae* was translated by King Alfred into Saxon and Chaucer into English.

Who think......a school-name : Mere words or a subject for discussion in the school of philosophers.

Indulgere genio : To indulge one's genius or birth-god is to indulge oneself.

The inward reason they stand upon: The operations of the intellect or conscience on which the philosophers dilate.

The good-fellow poet: The good-natured poet; a boon companion, having no superiority complex about himself.

The form of goodness: Cp. Tennyson : "We needs must love the highest when we see it."

And so steal to see: And so come insensibly to see.

Which seen...love: To see it as to love it.

Lines 741 to 760

Menenius Agrippa: The story of how he persuaded the Plebians is told in Shakespeare's *Coriolanus*. Agrippa was a Roman Consul and his address to Plebs on the Sacred Mount is given in Livy.

Geometry: Over the door of Plato's Academy there was, supposedly written that no man untaught in Geometry should enter.

They must have learned geometry: To Plato mathematical science was not philosophy, but a preliminary education, without which no one could ever attain to philosophy, for it tends to draw the soul towards truth and give the finishing stroke to the philosophic spirit.

Conceived: Apprehended.

With punishing: By punishing.

Lines 761 to 780

Nathan the prophet: The story is told in the Bible.

Tenderest office: In making David realize the enormity of sin.

Ungratefully: Seems to mean 'unkindly', as there is no question of gratitude in the Bible story.

The second......cause: God is the first cause. Nathan's story is the instrument used by God, and so it is the second cause.

Effectually: Effectively.

To make his end of: To adopt as its end or object. *Familiar*: Suitable.

The most excellent workman: i.e., the promotion of virtue.

Lines 781 to 800

Him : i.e. poetry (personified as excellent workman)

Although.........authority : What is produced is of utmost importance in judging whether a thing is praise-worthy or blame-worthy.

Sannazzaro : (1458-1530). He was a famous Italian poet. His chief works were *Arcadia*, a pastoral romance of mixed prose and verse, besides *Sonnetti e Canzoni*.

Comes all to one : Means one and the same thing to all.

The pastoral poem : Traditionally the lowest of the genres, although the poor shepherds' pipe was made to treat some of the greatest themes in Elizabethan poetry.

Lines 801 to 820

The poor pipe : The shepherd's oaten pipe, celebrated in pastoral poetry.

Meliboeus'...Tityrus : The former in Virgil's Ist Eclogue stands for the farmers whose plots of land had been seized by Augustus, while the latter may stand for Virgil whose land was restored to him.

Darius : King of Persia (336-331 B. C.) He was the last Persian King conquered by Alexander the Great.

Heraclitus : Of Ephesus, a philosopher of what is called the Ionian School. He flourished about B. C. 513, and refusing the chief magistracy of Ephesus lived in the mountains as a recluse. He has been called the "weeping philosopher", because he wept over the follies of mankind, as opposed to Democritus (B. C. 460), who laughed at them.

Who surely : i.e. the elegiac poet.

Painting out : Imaging ; displaying as in a picture.

Lines 821 to 840

Iambic : From 'iamb', the iambic trimeter being first used by Greek writers for direct attack, as against the *satiric* proper in which the poet uses the indirect method of ridicule and employs such devices as irony, allegory etc.

Who, Omne vafer etc. : Sidney has slightly altered the words of Persius. It implies 'who (like Horace) shrewdly touches every fault of his laughing friend. Adapted from Persius *Satires*, 1. 116-117, where Persius points out the difference between the satirical method

of Horace and that of Juvenal—two of his distinguished predecessors. Horace says that Persius excelled in light touches, whereas Juvenal vehemently attacked vices.

Circum praecordia ludit : Plays round (our heart).

Est Ulubris : The last lines of Horace, *Epistles* LXI, adapted : "Even here at Ulubrae is it (that we seek happiness). What you are seeking is here, it is at Ulubrae, if, there fail you not a mind were balanced." Ulubrae was an almost proverbially uninspiring town surrounded by marshes.

The comic : Comedy which had degenerated into a licentious form of farcical entertainment, was the butt of the just ridicule of the moralists. Sidney defends true comedy on didactic grounds. It mercilessly strips the mask off folly, and secondly, makes us know the straight by revealing the crooked. We have now come to the point in the 'Apology' at which Sidney is answering not general impressions only or common talk, but a definite attack. It was against plays, and specially against comedies, that Gosson's *The Schoole of Abuse* was directly written.

Comedy is an imitation : Sidney is quoting Aristotle.

Lines 841 to 860

A great foil : The ugliness of evil, by contrast, sets off the loveliness of virtue.

Demea : A pot-bellied father in the *Adelphi* of Terence.

Davus : A servant in Terence's *Andria and Phormio*.

Gnatho and *Thraso* : The names of two braggart-captains in the Eunuchus of Terence. These names are frequently employed in the literature of the age as synonyms for the qualities which they represent.

Who be such : Their real nature.

Signifying badge : 'Badge' was originally an emblem denoting a knight or his followers. Here it is figuratively used to mean 'distinguishing sign', or characteristic.

Pistrinum : The pounding mill, where slaves and criminals were sent to work as a punishment.

Sack of his own faults : Referring to the well-known fable of the two wallets which each man carries, the one in front for his neighbour's faults, the one behind for his own.

Tragedy : "Sidney's idea of tragedy differs from that of Aristotle only in one important aspect. The Aristotelian tragic emotion of pity is found in Sidney's 'commiseration', but instead of the Aristotelian terror, there is the Sidneian 'admiration' (wonder, reverence). For this modification of Aristotle Sidney is indebted to Minturno. Admiration, instruction and delight—these were supposed to be the three functions of poetry during the Renaissance" (V. Chatterji).

Lines 861 to 880

Effects : Emotions or feelings.

Qui Sceptra : "The cruel tyrant who wields his sceptre with harsh rules, he fears those who fear him, and terror recoils upon ts author." (Seneca, *Oedipus*)

Alexander Pheraeus : Alexander, the cruel tyrant of Pherae, in Thessaly, from about B. C. 369 to 367, ruled with great cruelty, and was at length assassinated by the brothers of his wife Thebe, at her instigation.

Lines 881 to 900

Natural problems : 'Tropes founded on points of natural history'. A problem is any question proposed for discussion and answer. But it was used especially of such as referred to points of natural history.

Barbarousness : Why Sidney seems to be apologetic here is because ballads were not properly appreciated in his day. One can notice a romantic note in Sidney's bold expression.

The old song... ..Douglas : The ballad of "*Chevy Chase*". The old version of it, to which Sidney doubtless refers, is given in Percy's *Reliques*.

Crowder : Fiddler ; bard.

With no rougher voice : With language as unrefined as his voice.

Pindar : (B. C. 520-440), the celebrated Greek poet, well-known for his Pindaric Odes.

In Hungary : Sidney was in Hungary in 1572-73, going there with Languet from Vienna.

The incomparable Lacedaemonians : The Spartans were past masters in singing martial songs and the manner in which they sang them is graphically described by Plutarch in Lycurgus.

Lines 901 to 920

Toys : Trifles.

Three fearful felicities : The other two are ; the news of a victory against the Illyrians and the announcement of birth of his son, Alexander. All the three felicities were reported to Philip on the same day.

That Kind : Lyric poetry.

Rests : Remains to be considered.

Heroical : Epic poetry, which, in Sidney's judgement, is regarded as the greatest form of poetry.

Turnus : The Italian prince killed by Aeneas.

Tydeus : One of the seven heroes who fought against *Thebes*.

Rinaldo : Orlando's cousin in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* ; or more probably the chief warrior in Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*. The Achilles of the Christian army.

Who, if the saying of Plato and Tully etc. : Unless we take 'who' to stand for 'in regard to whom' the construction breaks down utterly after the parenthesis. The references are to Plato's *Phaedrus*, 25 D. where it is 'wisdom' that is spoken, not exactly virtue. Cicero, however, seems to take this wisdom as 'the knowledge of the virtuous'.

Sets her out : 'Describes her' ; to paint out.

Lines 921 to 940

Be worn......memory : Be constantly available as an inspiring example indelibly inscribed in one's memory.

Religious ceremonies : The *Sacra*, which rather mean the objects of religious worship, the Penates.

Dido : Queen of Carthage, who killed herself when Aeneus, at the commands of the Gods, abandoned her in order to pave the way for the founding of Rome.

Passionate kindness : Lover's affection.

Gratefulness : Dido was very hospitable and kind to Aeneas, when she found him ship-wrecked on the shores of Carthage.

His outward government : His outward behaviour.

Melius Chrysippo : Better than "Chrysippus and Crantor" (Epistles. I. II. 4). Sidney here applies to Virgil what Horace says in connection with Homer. Chrysippus and Crantor were both philosophers.

Lines 941 to 960

His : Its (poetry).

Him : It (poetry).

The sum......him : Poetry as a whole ; the total or upshot of its value.

Particularities : Particulars.

Since, then, poetry : Before answering certain specific accusations Sidney here gives a careful summary of all his preceding arguments in praise of poetry.

Lines 961 to 980

Misomousoi : Haters of the muse.

Quips : Sarcastic remarks.

Spleen : Supposed to be the seat of laughter by the Elizabethan.

Lines 981 to 1000

Playing wit : 'A genius for paradox' or one endowed with a sportive fancy. *Yielding* : Granting.

Discretion of an ass : The wisdom of an ass. The German scholar Cornelius Agrippa in his *De Vanitate Scientiarum* (1530) praised 'the discretion of an ass'. Erasmus too wrote in praise of folly.

Jolly commodity : 'The excellent profit', or 'advantage'.

Ovid's verse : The actual line in Ovid which when translated into English means : "And let each fault lie hidden under the semblance of something good."

Agrippa : Henry Cornelius Agrippa was born at Cologne in 1486, of a noble family, devoted himself to literature and science, attained a mastery over eight languages, and finally turned his attention to alchemy. His most famous work, "Vanity of Arts and Sciences", was published in 1530.

Erasmus : (1467-1536) The greatest scholar and most prolific writer of his age, is known for his work 'Praise of Folly'.

Another foundation .....promise : Something more than appeared on the surface. Sidney means that these profoundly learned men were not satirizing real but false learning.

Marry : 'By Mary', generally written 'Marry'.

Comes not of wisdom : Does not arise from.

Good fools : 'Good' in the sense of contemptuous toleration as in 'good fellow'.

Lines 1001 to 1020

Versing : Writing in metrical form.

Scaliger : J. C. Scaliger, Italian critic (1484-1558). His *Poetics* exercised great influence on Renaissance Criticism. According to Scaliger the poet is 'a maker of verse'.

Oratio next to ratio : Oratio means 'power of speaking' and 'Ratio' means power of reasoning. These are the qualities that distinguish man from nature.

His forcible quality : Its persuasive nature.

Music : In the social and educational field music enjoyed a privileged position in Elizabethan times.

Lines 1021 to 1040

Accusing itself : Betraying itself.

The art of memory : One chapter in Agrippa's *Vanity of the Sciences* is on the 'Art of Memory', giving various rules for aiding the memory. Besides the art of memory is the art of remembering facts or arguments, commonly by forming images of each fact or part of argument in association, with a 'locality', for instance in a 'room', 'well and thoroughly known'.

Percontatorem : "Avoid an inquisitive man ; he is sure to be a prattler." (Horace, *Epistles*)

Dum sibi etc. : While each one is pleasing himself, we are a credulous lot.

Lines 1041 to 1060

Nurse of abuse : 'Nurse of corruption'. This is the sense in which Gosson uses the word as well as Stubbles in his *Anatomie of Abuses*. So 'to abuse' is 'to corrupt'.

Give the largest......Chaucer said: To 'give the largest field to plough', i.e. give the greatest opportunity. The reference to Chaucer is not for the sentiment, but merely for the phrase : Knight's Tale, 29.

> But at that thing I most as now forbear
> I have, God wot, a *large field to ere*.

Lines 1061 to 1080

Overshot Robin Hood : i.e. 'had shot their deadliest weapon' ; 'had surpassed everything'. The renown of Robin Hood, the prince of outlaws of the 12th century, was still great. Large numbers of popular ballads celebrated him, and village festivals or games were called after his name.

Plato banished them : In the Republic (Book 2) Plato does not forbid the presence of poets, but says their works must be expurgated for the use of the young.

Petere principium : Beg the question (i.e. to begin by assuming that which is required to be proved.)

First assumption : That there are more fruitful branches of knowledge.

Liars : As the poets are supposed to tell lies.

Though he would : The poet cannot be even if he is eager to do so.

Lines 1081 to 1100

Charon : The ferryman of the dead ; the boatman who takes the souls of the dead across the river Lethe which separates this world from the other.

The poet never......imagination : Does not use magic art to take in your imagination.

Even for his entry : 'As his introduction'.

Without : Unless.

Lines 1101 to 1120

Seeing Thebes......an old door : This refers to a state of things before the erection of public theatres in London (1575) and doubtless for some time after their first erection, when, plays were generally acted in the yards of various city hostelries, scandalous things were

represented in the little ale-houses and other places where the populace assembled.

Give the lie to : Accuse of falsehood. *Argues* : Proves.

John a Stile, and John a Noakes : The Doe and Roe of the ancient law courts. These are the fictitious names traditionally used for the two parties in a legal action.

Lines 1121 to 1140

Estates : Status.

Larded : 'Garnished', Cp. Shakespeare's *Troilus* : "Wit larded with malice."

The philosophers : Plato, for example, in his symposium.

Lines 1141 to 1160

Scurrility : From the Lat. *scurra*, a low wit or buffoon ; here it means 'indecency'.

Their sentence : Their decision.

Eikastike, Phantastike : 'Both are, according to Plato, subdivisions of the mimetic art, or art of imitation ; but whereas the former gives an exact reproduction of an object, its size, colour, and proportion preserved, the latter only produces a likeness by illusion as a painter does by the art of perspective, ; thus producing an impression of size, distance etc. which do not really exist in the picture' (E. S. Shuckburgh).

Abraham, Judith, David : Reference is to various Biblical stories.

Ill-pleased eye : The eye that is pleased by evil things.

Better-hidden matters : Things that had better have been written.

Abuse......abused : The misuse of poetry should not be any blemish of poetry as such.

I yield : I admit. *Concluding* : Proving a logical term.

Lines 1161 to 1180

Receives his title : Is entitled to approval or condemnation.

Rampire : Fortification ; defence.

To be in price : To be valued.

Sphinx : The legendary monster whose riddle Oedipus solved.

Lines 1181 to 1200

Albion : Ancient name for England.

A chainshot : Bullets or half bullets fastened together by a chain, and formerly used principally to destroy the rigging of ships.

Certain Goths : It is stated by Gibbon that 'in the sack of Athens, the Goths had collected all the libraries, and were on the point of setting fire to the funeral pile of Greek learning, had not one of their chiefs, of more refined policy than his brethren, dissuaded them from the design, by the profound observation, that as long as the Greeks were addicted to the study of books, they would never, apply themselves to the exercise of arms.

Lines 1201 to 1220

Jubeo stultum etc. : 'I bid him be a dunce to his heart's content' (Horace).

Quiddity : Subtlety ; essence.

Ens : Being ; existence.

Prima materia : The original 'matter' or 'substance' of the universe, concerning which the various schools of philosophers, were widely disagreed, some maintaining it to be air, others fire, water etc. It frequently therefore entered into scholastic discussion.

Corselet : Body armour.

Took dead Homer with him : Alexander was naturally a great lover of learning and reading. Onesicritus informs us that he constantly laid Homer's *Iliad*, according to the copy which he had corrected by Aristotle, called the 'Casket Copy', with his dagger under his pillow, declaring it a perfect treasure of military virtue.

Philosopher Callisthenes : Callisthenes, whose mother Hero was a neice of Aristotle, was a fellow pupil of Alexander under the great philosopher. He accompanied Alexander on his Asiatic expedition in B C. 334.

Lines 1221 to 1240

That Homer had been alive : On one occasion a messenger coming with a joyful countenance, Alexander exclaimed, "What are you going to tell me ? That Homer has come to life again ?"

If Cato......to the field : In B. C. 189 Ennius accompanied M. Fulvius Nobilior in his Aetolian campaign and took part in his triumph on his return. This proceeding was attacked by Cato.

Cato...Fulvius...Ennius : The poet Ennius went with the Consul Fulvius to Aeotolia. Cato, the elder, known as Censor because of his severity, did not approve of this and was displeased with Fulvius.

Cato Uticensis : Great grandson of Cato the Censor. The former in the text refers to Cato the Censor.

Plato : The god of the under-world.

A man that......Graces : Xenocrates was haughty and always had a frowning expression ; so that Plato frequently said to him : "Xenocrates, sacrifice to the Graces."

His unmustered person : Not on the muster-roll of army Roman commanders, consuls or pro-consuls frequently took with them men not enrolled in the legions ; but such men could not lawfully act as combatants.

Scipio Nasica : Publius Cornelius Scipio Nasica was in B. C. 203 declared to be the best citizen of Rome, and chosen by the Senate to fulfil certain commandments of the oracle in 204 B. C.

Both the other Scipio brothers : (1) Publius Cornelius Scipio Africanus, the elder, the conqueror of Hannibal at Zama B. C. 202. (2) Lucius Cornelius Scipio Asiaticus, brother of Africanus under whose command King Antiochus was defeated near Mt. Sipylus in B. C. 190.

Caused his body......sepulchre : "Our poet Ennius was beloved by the elder Africanus, and so is often believed to be represented in marble on the tomb of the Scipios' (Cicero). This tomb with the bust of Ennius is still extant.

So as : So that.

Lines 1241 to 1260

Plato his name : Sidney is here concerned with the notorious accusations urged against poetry by Plato. For instance, Plato's chief objection against poetry is that it is totally false and that it is an imitation of an imitation.

Lines 1261 to 1280

Unworthy to live : For example, Socrates who was condemned to death.

Simonides : A distinguished lyric poet patronised by Hiero.

Hiero the First : Tyrant of Syracuse (478-467 B. C.)

Plato......Dionysius : It is said that Plato was sold as a slave by Dionysius, tyrant of Syracuse.

Do thus : Argue in this fashion.

Cavillations : Retorts or frivolous repartees.

As likewise one should do : By using such unfair arguments Sidney is only trying to pay back the philosopher in his own coin.

Lines 1281 to 1300

So as they be : On condition of their being.

Which is likewise......poetry : Which also applies to poetry. What Sidney means is that poetry should be honoured as well, provided it is noble and good.

Set a watchword etc. : Attaches a word of warning to philosophy. "See that none lead you away captive by philosophy and vain deceit according to the tradition of men, according to the elements of the world." (Coloss. II.8)

Wrong opinions of the gods : In the *Republic* Plato enumerates the stories of the Gods which are not to be admitted, and ends thus : "When a Poet holds such language concerning the Gods we shall be angry with him, and refuse him a chorus."

Induce : Introduce ; bring in.

The very religion : The true religion.

Stood upon : Dwelt upon ; was concerned with.

Plutarch : In his Morals.

Lines 1301 to 1320

Construe : Explain.

Qua anthoritate : And this authority certain uncouth and barbarous writers seek to misuse for the purpose of driving poets out of the Republic.

Law : Indulgence.

Ion : In the dialogue of Plato thus entitled Socrates is represented as congratulating Ion, a professional reciter, on the delightfulness, as it involves continual association with works of poets, and especially with those of Homer.

Than go about......authority : Then try to overset his authority.

More than myself do : Sidney does not believe that some sort of divine inspiration is the only source of poetic genius.

Namely to be......divine force : Plato says in *Ion* : "For all good poets utter their beautiful poems, not from art, but from being god-inspired and possessed."

Lines 1321 to 1340

Apparent : Evident.

Laelius : C. Laelius Sapiens the younger, the friend of the younger Scipio Africanus : born B. C. 186. He was chiefly famous for his skill in the science of augury, his study of Greek philosophy and letters, and his oratory.

Heautontimoroumenon : The self-tormenter, a title of a play of Terence, in which a father is represented as doing voluntary penance by labouring in the fields, for having driven his son into exile by his severity.

Apollo : Was supposed to speak through the Delphic Oracle.

In putting Aesop's......verses : Socrates left no written work, except perhaps a hymn to Apollo and Artemis composed in prison, and a rhythmical version of one of Aesop's fables.

He trims......guards of poesy : Referring to the frequent quotations from the poets found in all Plutarch's biographies and treatises.

Guards : Ornamental border on a dress.

Lines 1341 to 1360

The ill-savoured breath : The unfavourable remarks.

Wrong speakers : Unfavourable critics. 'To wrong' means 'to speak ill of'.

Only proceed from their wit : Comes exclusively from their own imagination.

Being indeed makers of themselves : Independent composers.

Lines 1361 to 1380

Musa, mihi : "O Muse, tell me the causes, what deity was offended."

Adrian : The famous Roman Emperor Hadrian (A. D. 117-138) wrote several works in prose and verse, of which a few epigrams are preserved in the Anthologies.

Sophocles : Great Greek tragic poet who was appointed one of the ten generals in the war against Samos.

Germanicus : Son of Drusus, the brother of the emperor Tiberius who served with great distinction in many parts of the world, especially Germany, from which he took his name. He was also author of many poems.

Robert, King of Sicily : He was King of Naples (1309-1343). His special friends and favourites were Petrarch and Boccaccio. Despite a life full of struggle and activity he always showed the greatest interest in literature.

King Francis of France : Francis I (1515-1547), called the father of letters and arts, was a munificent patron of letters, and protected many scholars and painters such as Scaliger and Leonardo da Vinci.

King James of Scotland : James I of Scotland (1405-1436) during his 18 years of detention in England received an excellent education, and on his return to Scotland is said to have done much for the introduction of letters and polite learning there. He was also the author of a poem called the 'King's Quair'.

Bembus : Cardinal Bembo was a well-known Latin poet.

Bibbiena : Bernardo Dovizi, a humanist, was the author of a famous comedy called *Calandra*.

Beza : He was a French biblical scholar who published at Paris several Latin poems.

Melancthon : A German scholar, reformer and a friend of Luther ; was a writer of theological treatises. He also wrote commentaries on the classics.

Fracastorius : Hieronymus Fracastorius of Verona, a poet, philosopher, astronomer and physician. Scaliger, in his criticism of modern Latin poets, gives him the highest praise of all.

Muretus : Marc Antoine Muret, a French scholar and poet, was born at Muret (1526-85).

George Buchanan : George Buchanan (1506-1580) was one of the greatest names in Scotland literature of the 16th century. His Latin poetry was considered by Joseph Scaliger and other critics as superior to that of all others of his age in France, Italy and Germany.

Hospital of France : Michael de l' Hospital was a distinguished French lawyer and statesman who was sent by Henry II to represent him at the Council of Trent.

Lines 1381 to 1400

When the trumpet......loudest : For instance Chaucer, who lived in the warlike reign of Edward III.

Mars : The God of war.

Over-faint quietness : The reference is to a quarter of a century of perfect peace under Elizabeth I. The 25 years' peace under Queen Elizabeth was much talked of ; and the queen apparently liked to have it referred to.

Strew the house : A metaphor taken from the use of rushes strewn on the floor, which was still the common practice in all large halls, and in all rooms but those of the richest, who were just beginning the use of carpets.

Mountebanks at Venice : Quacks. The mountebanks (Italian mountebanco. Literally one who mounts a bench.) were the venders of quack medicines and other nostrums ; and their eloquence was like that of the cheap Jacks of our day. Of these the mountebanks of Venice were especially famous.

Troubled in the net with Mars : According to Greek mythology, Venus, the goddess of love, deserted her lame husband Vulcan in favour of the valiant Mars. She was caught in a net with Vulcan. What Sidney seems to suggest is : as with love, so with poetry, war is an irresistible attraction.

Idle England : Peaceful England.

Epaminondas : Theban general. According to Plutarch "he was appointed to it in scorn, but did not neglect it." 'It' here stands for the office of a Telearch, a sort of local police office or companionship of sewers at Thebes.

Post : Hasten.

Banks of Helicon : Helicon is a mountain, a continuation of the range of Parnassus, and regarded as a special haunt of the Muses.

Post......Helicon : Write poetry.

Lines 1401 to 1420

Queis meliore : Adapted from Juvenal : "Whose hearts the Titan (Prometheus) moulded of a nobler clay."

Are better content......their wit : The poets of the 16th century wrote for their own delectation and for that of their friends, and not

for the general public. They generally had the greatest aversion to their works appearing in print.

In despite of Pallas : Against Minerva's will, without the blessing of the goddess of knowledge.

The ancient learned : The learned among the ancients.

A divine gift : As Cicero, one of the most learned men of the ancient, looked upon poetry.

Carried unto it : Inclined to it by an irrestible impulse.

Lines 1421 to 1440

Orator fit, poeta nascitur : The orator is made, the pcet is born.

Deadalus : Daedalus, who invented wings for himself and his son Icarus, but Icarus flew, in spite of his father's advice to the contrary, too near to the sun. Icarus's waxen wings melted, and he fell down, headlong.

But these......withal : But we do not trouble ourselves with either rules of art or models.

Forebackwardly : Putting the cart before the horse.

Quodlibet : Vague ; lit, 'anything that pleases one' , a word used to express the matter of scholastic disputation.

Though wrongly......rank : They seemed to think that whatever they said was verse, but it was not actually so as they never cared to order their lines in a regular manner.

Quicquid etc. : Adapted from Ovid Pope's : "I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came."

Troylus and Cresseid : This poem is written by Chaucer who always professes it to be a translation and not original. It is curious that Sidney should speak of this poem as Chaucer's obvious title to fame, without mentioning the *Canterbury Tales*, which however he knew.

Lines 1441 to 1460

Mirrour of Magistrates : This was a joint work projected in 1555 or 1557 by Baldwin and Ferrers. In the second edition (1563), an *Induction* and a *Complaint of the Duke of Buckingham* were added by Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst, which is the only part of the work now much read.

Surrey's Lyrics: The learned and accomplished Lord Henry Howard, son of the Duke of Norfolk, and by courtesy Earl of Surrey (born 1516) and beheaded on a charge of high treason. His poems inspired by this real or fancied passion were first published in Tottel's *Miscellany.*

Sheapheard's Kalender : Spenser's first major publication, dedicated to the noble and virtuous Gentleman, most worthy of all titles both of learning and chivalry, Master Philip Sidney.

That same framing...language : Edward Kirke in his Epistle defends the poet on this point : "And first of the words to speak, I grant they be something hard and of most men unused, yet both English, and also used of most excellent authors, and, most famous poets." Sidney disapproves Spenser's use of archaic language in Shepheard's Calender.

Theocritus : Sicilian bucolic poet. He too wrote a language which he did not speak, and which was probably an intentional imitation of the rustic Doric of the Sicilian Greeks.

Ordering : Planning. *Honest Civility* : Decency.

Gorboduck : The play called *Ferrex and Porrex*, by Thomas Sackville, Lord Buckhurst and Thomas Norton. It is the earliest blank-verse tragedy in English, and served as a model for the later English playwrights, including Shakespeare.

Lines 1461 to 1480

Seneca his style : Seneca's tragedies now much neglected and their authenticity doubted, were widely read in the middle ages ; and were the models on which the early tragedy writers formed their plays.

Delightfully teach : Sidney often emphasizes delightful teaching as "the very end of poesie".

Defectious : Defective.

Circumstances : Subordinate parts.

For it is faulty both in place and time : The 'dramatic unities' which Shakespeare so often sets at naught, and of which modern playwriters, as well as modern spectators and readers have learnt to think little, were at this time thought all important by the critics, who accepted Aristotle's rule as final.

Aristotle's precept : It must be remembered that although the unities of time, place and action are known as Aristotelian (and Sidney

seems to be under the same impression) they were actually formulated by Castelvetro in his commentary on the *Poetics*.

Common reason : It is the opinion of the learned critics like Dr. Johnson that these unities are not based on common sense.

Inartificially : Inartistically. *The rest* : Other English dramas.

Under-kingdoms : 'Inferior kingdoms'—included in the large name.

Lines 1481 to 1500

With four swords and bucklers : Cp. Shakespeares' Henry V, Act 4. Prol. 48 :

> And so our scene must to the battle fly :
> Where, O for pity ! we shall much disgrace—
> With four or five most vile and ragged foils.

Traverses : Difficulties ; crosses. *Players* : Playwrights.

Eunuchus : Sidney has mistakenly used 'Eunuchus' for *Heautontimoroumenos*, a comedy of Terence.

And though Plautus......done amiss : Sidney perhaps means the *Rudens*, in which there is a considerable interval between the 3rd and 4th Acts.

Lines 1501 to 1520

Calicut : The capital of Malabar, the first port in India known to Europeans—the Portuguese having visited it in 1498.

Pacolet's horse : The magic horse of Pacolet, a dwarf in the old story of Valentine and Orson, an old French Romance, which appears to have been first printed in English by Wyrken de Worde.

Nuntius : The 'messenger' who in Greek tragedies usually announces and describes the catastrophe.

Ab ovo : 'From the egg', that is, from the very beginning.

A story : The story of the Hecuba of Euripides.

Polydorus : In the Hecuba of Euripides.

Lines 1521 to 1540

Neither right......comedies : Sidney believes in the rigid separation of tragedy and comedy. He is against tragi-comedy.

Head and shoulders : Forcibly.

Admiration......sportfulness : Neither the aims of tragedy nor those of comedy ; neither they arouse the tragic emotion, nor do they delight.

Mongrel : 'Mixed', connected with 'might'. *Monger* : A 'dealer' in a mixture of things.

Apuleius did somewhat so : It is not easy to see what Sidney means by introducing a mention of Apuleius among comedians and tragedians. In his *Apologia* indeed Apuleius says that he had written various poems, Lyrics, Comedies and Tragedies ; but of all these we have nothing except such fragments of verses as he himself quotes in his *Apologia.* The work in which he is chiefly known is 'the Golden Ass', a long Romance in XI books, in which satire, erotic stories and serious reflections are mingled.

Amphitryo : A tragi-comedy written by Plautus. But it can be called tragi-comic on the score of the introduction of gods and heroes. In all other respects it is a pure comedy. But the presence of these personages was held to remove it from the category of simple comedy.

Very daintily : Here means 'fastidiously' or 'with nice discrimination'.

Hornpipes : Merry times, generally for country dances.

Lines 1541 to 1560

Scurrility : Indecency. (Lat. *scurra*, professional jester, 'a buffoon').

Doltishness : (dolt from 'dull') foolishness. *Tract* : Course ; extent.

Conveniency to ourselves : 'Suitability' or 'similarity'.

A scornful tickling : A tickling produced by scorn.

We laugh at deformed creatures : From Aristotle's *Poetics.* An instance of the laughable is a face that is ugly or distorted otherwise than by pain.

Lines 1561 to 1580

We shall......laughter : On the contrary, we sometimes laugh at something said in error, even though we should be sorry for the speaker. Such enforced laughter is a source of pain rather than pleasure.

Go down the hill against the bias : Take a wrong and unexpected turn : a metaphor from the game of bowls, the bias properly being 'the slope', though it is often used for the weight in the side of the bowl.

For the respect of them : On account of them ; on their account.

Twenty mad antics : Twenty fantastic representations.

Lines 1581 to 1600

Nil habet : "Wretched poverty has nothing harder against itself than that it makes men ridiculous" (Juvenal).

Busy loving : Officious ; fussy. *Heartless* : Cowardly. Thus the heart is used for courage.

Self-wise seeming schoolmaster : The pompous and ignorant pedant is a common object of satire.

A wry-transformed traveller : A man corrupted by travel ; a traveller who has adopted foreign manners, etc. and done it wrongly.

These if we saw......play naturally : If we saw these characters' which we support in real life, represented on the stage.

Teaching delightfulness : Pleasure which is also instructive.

As in the other : i.e. the serious or tragic part of poetry.

Lines 1601 to 1620

Other sorts of poetry almost have we none : Sidney seems to mean of actually living writers, yet he has already mentioned the *Mirrour for Magistrates* and Spenser's *Shepheard's Calender*.

Lyrical kind of songs and sonnets : Mostly in the anthologies the first of which was Tottel's *Miscellany*.

New-budding occasions : Subject matter ever-fresh.

Than that in truth......passions : Sidney has himself hit the secret of true passion in poetry.

Lines 1621 to 1640

Honey-flowing : Mellifluous.

Coursing of a letter : Sidney means alliteration. That is as in acrostics, the initial letter of the several lines spelling some word.

With figures and flowers : With the lines so arranged as to form some figure, such as a flower, an altar, or wings ; Sidney is referring to figures of speech and striking phrases used to decorate the language.

Winter-starved : Shrivelled ; frost stricken.

Tully and Demosthenes : They were regarded models of eloquence

Nizolian paper-books : Marius Nizolius (1498-1566) was born at Brescello in the Duchy of Modena, in 1498 ; gave lectures in Rhetoric at Parma, and was afterwards Principal of the University of Sabionetta.

Attentive translation : Careful transference.

Lines 1641 to 1660

At the fit and natural place : But, after all, rings in the ears are no more 'fit and natural' than in the nose. In both cases the propriety is the result of convention.

Vivit etc. : "He lives. Lives, I say ? In truth he comes even into the Senate."

Familiar epistle : Letter to familiar person.

Choler : A pun on 'colour' (flowing style).

Similiter cadences : Phrases which have similar sounds (frequently used by orators). Puttenham says : "This *cadence* is a fall of a verse in every last word with a certain tunable sound which being matched with another of like sound do make a concord."

Daintiness : Grace ; delicacy ; good taste.

Would prove two eggs three : The story has been often repeated in various forms as a satire on logical quibblings. The story in the following form, with glasses of wine instead of eggs is quoted as follows :

> A conceited young scholar from Oxford, drinking with two gentlemen, must needs be forming syllogisms. He bade them all two glasses, which they did. 'Now', said he 'I will prove those two glasses to be three. Thus : is not one here ? 'Yes', says one. 'And here another ; that's two', says he, 'Yes', says the other gentleman. 'Why then', says the scholar, 'one and two are three ; so 'tis done'. 'Very well', says one, 'I'll have one glass and my friend here shall have the other, and you shall have the third for your pains in finding it out.

Sophister : A University term for students of a certain standing to dispute in the schools. Cp. Pope, *Dunciad*,

> Three College Sophs, and three pert Templars came,
> The same their talents, and their tastes the same.

Lines 1661 to 1680

Fineness : Ingenuity ; subtlety.

Similitudes : Similes ; often far-fetched.

All Herbarists, all stories of beasts etc. : Sidney seems here to be referring distinctly first to Gosson's *The Schoole of Abuse*, and secondly to Lyly's *Euphues*. In both these works the trick of piling up a series of illustrations from a curious and wonderful natural history is conspicuous.

Not to set by it : Not to value it ; set store by it.

Mark : Purpose. *Knacks* : Tricks ; ornaments ; property of dress, and so of oratory.

Lines 1681 to 1700

Deserve to be pounded : The 'pound' is an enclosure. maintained formerly in each village for strayed cattle. Here pounded seems to mean 'condemned'.

Wordish consideration : Consideration regarding the use of words.

Awry : Out of the straight ; wrong.

Lines 1701 to 1720

Both the other : Saxon and French languages.

It wants grammar : It is not of course true that English is without grammar, or these differences of cases etc., as Sidney says : though the tendency of an analytical language is to get rid of them to a great extent. The earliest treatise on English Grammar seems not to have been published till some time after Sidney's death, when appeared in Cambridge, printed by J. Legatt, (1594), a Latin treatise.

A piece......Babylon's curse : The tower of Babel is thus called from a notion that it was part of Babylon.

That has it equally......the world : The capability of English for the purposes of poetry it had been the fashion to depreciate in comparison with Latin.

In compositions of two or three words together : Sidney's own practice in this respect will not perhaps always commend itself to a modern reader. Sidney himself has used a large number of such compound words in this essay. The critics of the next generation looked upon the use of these compounds as a fashion introduced by Sidney in his *Arcadia*.

Number : Equal number of syllables in each line. *Accent* : Stress.

With some regard of the accent : It was the sufficient regard to accent that makes much of the early English poetry rough and unpleasant.

Lines 1721 to 1740

Cumbered with : Hindered ; obstructed or burdened with. *Elision* : Suppression of vowel or syllable in pronouncing (rarely) of passage in a book etc. ; dropping of sounds. *Antepenultima* : Last but two (usually of syllables). *Sliding* : Going smoothly along ; go unconsciously or by imperceptible degrees.

Lines 1741 to 1760

Sdrucciola : Slippery ; sliding syllable ; a term applied to tri-syllable rhyme.

Toy : Trifle.

Lines 1761 to 1780

Civility : Civilization ; culture ; as opposed to barbarism.

Clauserus : Conrad Clauser who translated into Latin the work of the Greek Stoic Cornutus on the nature of the Gods. He flourished in the reign of Nero, by whom he was banished in A. D. 68. He was the instructor of the poets Persius and Lucan.

Quid non : What not.

Landino : Cristofero Landino (1424-1504) was born in Florence, and was protected and favoured by Cosmo and Pietro de Medici, and appointed by the latter tutor to his famous son Lorenzo. He was also a great writer and a distinguished poet.

Lines 1781 to 1800

Herculea proles : 'Descendant of Hercules' i.e., royal, as were the royal families of Sparta and other towns.

Si quid mea : Virgil, *Aeneid*, IX. 446 : "If aught my verse can do."

With Dante's Beatrix : i.e., in Paradise. *Virgil's Anchises* : i.e., in the Elysian fields.

The dull-making cataract : The loud noise of the water-falls of the Nile was supposed to produce dullness of the sense of hearing. Seneca says that a tribe settled near the cataracts of the Nile were so deafened by the noise that they had to be removed to a quieter place.

Plant-like music : The music of the Spheres produced by the rotation of the Planets, each planet giving a note higher than that next to it, and the seven spanning the whole octave, was a doctrine of Pythagoras.

Such a mome as to be a Momus of poetry : The two words are identical, but are used differently. A mome is a stupid person. But *Momus* ('blame', 'ridicule') is personified in Hesiod's Theogeny as the son of Night. Hence he is used for the impersonification of the critical spirit. Momus is also the Greek god of ridicule.

Midas : King of Phrygia, whose enormous wealth was the subject of numerous legends.

The ass's ears of Midas : Midas was chosen as one of the judges to decide between the musical abilities of Apollo and Marsyas ; he differed from other judges in awarding the prize to Marsyas. Apollo to punish him changed his ears into those of an ass. He hid them under his Phrygian cap from everyone but his barber, who was so oppressed by the secret that he dug a hole and whispered it to the earth. But by and by reeds grew up from the hole, which as they waved in the wind pronounced the words 'Midas has asses ears.'

Bubonax : Sidney is referring to the tale of Hipponax (an Iambic poet of Ephesus about B. C. 500) of whom one story was that he satirized the statutory Bupalus, who had represented his face in its native ugliness, so bitterly that he hanged himself. By some confusion of mind or printer he has combined the two names *Hipponax* and *Bupalus* into 'Bubonax'.

Rhymed to death, as is said to be done in Ireland : He seems to refer to the supposed power of the bards of whom the Irish peasants had a superstitious fear. Hardiman states in his *Irish Minstrelsy* : "To the present day the rural Irish dread nothing so much as the satirical severity of their bards."

10

Select Literary Criticism

(1)

Two Definitions of Poetry

High points of interest in the essay include a preliminary double definition of poetry, from Aristotle and from Horace, a now famous statement that the poet's tale "holds" children from play and old man from the chimney-corner, an adaptation of Aristotelian doctrine making poetry a union of philosophy and history and giving it the highest literary palm after the *scriptures*, an invocation of Plato as a witness for poetry (following so reputable an authority as Scaliger, Sidney overrates the Socratic concessions to poetic frenzy in the *Ion*), and a section where Sidney applies Scaligerian and Horatian norms to English poetry. He protests against the slack unity of academic tragedies (excepting *Gorboduc*) and the clatter of wooden swords in battle endings. He mentions Spenser's *Shepheardes Calender* with respect, admits the stirring of his heart at the old ballad of Chevy Chase, and looks back with wistful respect and wonder at Chaucer—"that he in that misty time could see so clearly." We may look on these latter details of Sidney's Defence as constituting an early landmark in the progress of English literary self-consciousness and literary history.

—*Wimsatt and Brooks*

(2)

The Moral Content

To look a little more closely at the theoretic content of Sidney's moral defence of poetry : one should note in the first place that the second of Sidney's preliminary definitions is such as to make the moral *content* of poetry (that is, vices and virtues correctly evaluated) a part of its essential requirement—as indeed his first definition names the purpose of poetry explicitly as teaching.

Poesy, is therefore, an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word *mimesis*, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting,

or figuring forth ; to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture, with this end,—to teach and delight.

......it is not riming and versing that maketh a poet...but it is that feining notable images of virtues, vices, or what else, with that delightful teaching, which must be the right describing note to know a poet by.

—Wimsatt and Brooks

(3)

Moral Versus Immoral

Yet in the second place, at a much later point in the essay, when he is facing Platonic objections and is hence forced into reasoning about the moral requirement and how to reconcile it with the stark fact that much fine poetry is immoral, Sidney says something different : the phenomenon of immoral poetry ("amorous conceits," "lust," "vanity," "scurrility" in poetry) means "not...that poetry abuseth man's wit, but that man abuseth poetry." He could have said (though to say so would have contradicted easily observable facts, and he did not say it) that immoral poetry was, by his earlier definition, no poetry at all. He preferred to raise the question how poetry, which is defined as something moral, can be in fact either moral or immoral His answer—in terms of the ideal conceived as what is most real—should not be dismissed too lightly, though it perhaps gives mere logic some difficulty.

Nay, truly, though I yield that poesy may not only be abused, but that by being abused, by the reason of his sweet charming force it can do more hurt than my other army of words, yet shall it be so far from concluding that the abuse should give reproach to the abused, that contrariwise it is a good reason, that whatsoever, being abused, doth most harm, being rightly abused—and upon the right use each thing receiveth his title—doth most good.

—Wimsatt and Brooks

(4)

The Poetic Values

Many volumes of subsequent debate have perhaps not adjusted this delicate conflict of values any more satisfactorily. One might summarize the problem by saying that Sidney, like most of those who have maintained that poetry is (and ought to be) moral, has not been able to resolve an ambiguity of the word 'ought' as used in the formula. Is this a poetic "ought," or is it in fact only a moral "ought" ? In the second sense "ought to be moral" is a tautology—since moral is what all our works ought to be. Is the

thesis about the morality of poetry a truism in the realm of morals, or does it lie actually in the realm of poetics ? Does it actually relate to the poet's craft ?

The defence of poesie by Sir Phillip Sidney is both the English locus of closet contact with Italian criticism and a brilliant epitome of what was best in the spirit of that criticism.

—*Wimsatt and Brooks*

(5)

The Utilitarian Defence of Poetry

The utilitarian defense of poetry by an Englishman appears quite early in the century with Sir Thomas Elyot's *Booke of the Governour*, 1530, in which chapters X and XII of Book I (the education of a public servant described by a public servant) maintain that Homer and Virgil can teach the young man not only moral lessons but arms, politics, and horse-breeding. (The pre-Platonic directness of this apology—as if the rhapsode Ion were speaking—was perhaps possible only because it came before the great Vogue of Aristotle's poetics.) A less pragmatic idea about the civilizing value of literature was one of the basic premises of Renaissance humanism and of the Renaissance theory of education —in the *Adagia* of Erasmus, for instance, or the treatises of Ludovicus Vives. Throughout Italian criticism of the century (in Trissino, Minturno, Cinthio, Mazzoni, for instance, and in all other writers) the accepted formula is morally didactic, the Horatio—Aristotelian instruction and pleasure, with countless inconclusive variations on the relation between the two. (Castelvetro, with a practical concern for the recreation of the common spectator, was one of the earliest to make an emphatic disavowal of the didactic view—a disavowal that would gain ground with French 17th century critics. At the same time the Platonic charge of immorality might readily enough be brought against poetry—especially when English moralists (for example, Roger Ascham in his *Scholemaster*) associated poetry with Italianate license in manners or dress, or when Puritan writers turned their attention to the theatre. One of the most pungent of the latter—and today one of the best known of all those who changed in the long pamphlet war that began in England shortly after the start of the London professional theatre in 1571—was Stephen Gosson, by Catholic seminary in Rome, and on Angelicon clergyman, parson at Great Wigborow in Essex and at St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate. The gist of his rattling, tart, Euphuistic double protest, against the moral influence of plays themselves and of the deplorable bordello company which flocked to the theatre, may be told almost sufficiently in the garrulous title of his *School of Abuse* : containing a pleasant invective against Poets, Pipers, Players, Jesters and such like caterpillars of a commonwealth : setting up the Flag of Defiance to

their mischievous exercise, and overthrowing their Bulwarks, by profane writers, Natural Reason, and common experience : A Discourse as pleasant for them that favour learning, as profitable for all that will follow virtue. "Because I have been matriculated myself in the school where so many abuses flourish," writes Gosson in one of his characteristically eloquent passages, "I will imitate the dogs of Egypt, which coming to the banks of Nilus to quench their thirst, sip and away, drink running, lest they be snapped short for a prey to crocodiles."

......You are no sooner entered but liberty looseth the reins and gives you head, placing you with poetrie in the lowest form, when his skill is shown to make his scholar as good as ever twanged : he prefers you to piping, from piping to playing, from play to pleasure, from pleasure to sloth, from sloth to sleep, from sleep to sin, from sin to death, from death to Devil, if you take your learning apace, and pass through every form without revolting.

—*Wimsatt and Brooks*

(6)

The School of Abuse

This pamphlet appeared in 1579, with a dedication "To the right noble Gentleman, Master Phillip Sidney, Esquire." It was a moment when Sidney, returned from his educational travels in Switzerland and Italy, standing loosely attached to Elizabeth's court under the patronage of Leicester, and in companionable relation to Spenser and other gentlemen of like spirit, war engaged in the literary occupations, his sonnets to Stella and his Romance *Arcadia*, by which in the short time that remained before his death at Zutphen he became the brilliant symbol of the courtly literary spirit of England. Largely from Gosson's dedication and from an allusion to this by Spenser in a letter dated from Leicester House to the Cambridge scholar Gabriel Harvey, but in part also from certain moments in Sidney's argument and certain snatches of parodied Euphuistic style which seen echoes of Gosson, Sidney's *Defence of Poesie*, though written perhaps as late as 1585, has been traditionally considered a retort to Gósson. It circulated in manuscript among the literati during Sidney's life and was soon quoted in the best critical places—in Puttenham's *Arte* of 1589, in Harnington's *Apologie* of 1598. In the year 1595 it had the advantage of being published simultaneously by two printers, Ponsonby and Olney, under two titles, *The Defence of Poesie* and *An Apologie for Poetrie*. It is a kind of formal beginning of literary theorizing by the Englishman of letters, and a brilliant enough one—written in the High, enthusiastic, occasionally a syntactic style of the gifted amateur champion, headlong to out-dazzle the lowness and myopia of profession as moral grumblers. The essay reflects and

telescopes not only the continental criticism of the century but a certain amount of classical Greek and Roman as well. Passages have been assigned to Minturno, Scaliger, and Castelvetro. And latterly the original sources of neo-classic criticism and anti-criticism, Aristotle's Poetics and Plato's Republic, Book X (Perhaps in Latin translations such as Pazzi's of Aristotle and Ficino's of Plato), have been urged as the true fountains of Sidney's learning. It is certain that he read little Greek, and it appears likely to us that he was better acquainted with contemporary interpretations of classical criticism than with the latter itself. But it all matters little. Sidney wrote, not a pedant's encyclopedia, but a gentleman's essay.

—Wimsatt and Brooks

(7)

Apology as an Epitome of Renaissance Criticism

When in 1595 the third and last of Sidney's principal works, the *Apologie for Poetrie*, was published only his treatment of the drama was out of date. In everything else he stated what was by now, thanks to him, the accepted critical position long known in manuscript, though not to say wide an audience as had read with delight the *Arcadia* and *Astrophel and Stella*, his essay was less an influence itself than a record of those influences which had shaped the New Poetry of England. Here he summed up the whole Renaissance tradition of criticism more concisely, more persuasively, with a more urbane elegance than any similar work in any language. Reading it we can understand how the astonishing development of English Literature, in those twelve or fifteen years that had passed since Sidney returned from his embassage to the Imperial court, had been brought about.

—John Buxton

(8)

Defence Against Puritans

Sidney himself was concerned in his *Apologie* rather to defend poetry generally against the attacks of the Puritans than to claim any notable achievement by English poets ; to assert that such achievement was desirable, not to announce its existence. Among the poets who have already written his selection is cursory. To Chaucer, like all Elizabethans, he gives the pre-eminence, and (as was usual at that time) he preferred *Troilus and Criseyde* to all the other Poems. "Truly, I know not whether to marvel more, either that he in that mystic time could see so clearly, or that we in this cleare age walke so stumblingly after him. Of more recent poetry he refers to the *Mirrour for Magistrates* and the poems of the Earl

of Surrey. He makes no mention of Wyatt, perhaps because, like Puttenham, he found very little difference between him and Surrey. Of poems by living writers he mentions only the *Shepheard's Calendar*, to which he gives qualified approval."

—John Buxton

(9)

Sidney's Apology :
A New Phase in Critical Theory

Such then are the main contents of Sidney's *Apology for Poetry*, a work which has rightly been valued as one of the outstanding performances in English criticism and one which inaugurated a new phase in critical history. It has been described as an epitome of Renascence theory ; but this description can be misleading if it is taken to mean nothing more than a summary reproduction of classical and Italian doctrine. What gives to the work its undoubted value is its originality, the skill with which Sidney has drawn on earlier teaching, selecting, adapting and fusing together ideas gathered from many sources in order to set forth ultimately his own conception of poetry, independently arrived at. Thus apart from the Italians, he makes use of Plato and Aristotle, Horace and Plutarch ; but, like Horace, he subscribes to the authority of no one school of thought. His treatment throughout is of an eclectic kind ; his conclusions are the results of personal reflexion as well as wide reading ; and upon them is stamped the impress of a lofty personality. At the same time it cannot be doubted that Platonic influence played a considerable, perhaps a predominant, part in shaping his views, owing to some affinity of spirit. To him poetry was a natural human activity enabling men to sing of beauty and truth, and to satisfy their longings for a world transformed, thus nurturing in them what was good and noble. Moreover, so far from being merely an instrument for moral teaching, it was a concrete and inspiring revelation of human ideals, and thus, in a sense, a criticism of life. This, then, with its element of permanent truth, was the substance of Sidney's message to an age perplexed and even hostile. With the traditional objections boldly faced, with claims put forward for a place for poetry in the intellectual and social life, and with attempts made at a serious treatment of the poetic art, that message constituted a vindication of poetry, individual and unique in kind, which restored to poetry, something of its ancient prestige and meaning, and was calculated to bring enlightenment and reassurance to his own generation.

—J. W. H. Atkins

(10)

Originality of Presentation

Nor was the originality of the work confined solely to its subject-matter, in the manner of presentation, too, will be foun

a freshness and vigour characteristic of Sidney alone. Writing for courtly circles and in a vein far removed from the fantastic and pedestrian styles of contemporary pamphlets and disputations, he achieved a form of expression unsurpassed even in an age of daring experiments in prose. Nowhere else do we find the same happy mingling of the ideal and the practical, the same blend of dignity and humour, of sincerity and irony, of controlled enthusiasms and racy colloquialisms ; or again, that unstudied simplicity and grace which everywhere pervade the work. And over and above all this was the realistic presentment of his abstract theme in concrete terms. In antiquity the vivid representation of things by means of word pictures (i.e. *evagyeia)* had been strongly commended ; but to the Elizabethans the device seems to have come naturally and inevitably in the absence of abstract and philosophical terms. This accounts in a large measure for the appeal of, much of Elizabethan prose ; and in Sidney's *Apology* it gives to the work much of its simple charm and effectiveness. It is therefore as the first piece of literary criticism in English that is literature itself that the *Apology* figures in critical history, and appearing as it did in the dawn of the great efforescence, it forms a worthy prelude to what was to follow. Of its actual infiuence on contemporaries one can but conjecture ; though circulated in manuscript as it was among Sidney's friends up to the date of publication (1595) its effects can scarcely have been slight. On Ben Jonson its influence is abundantly clear ; the same is also true in connexion with Shakespeare and other dramatists ; while Shelley later on was not alone in deriving inspiration from its pages when he wrote his *Defence of Poetry*. As a fitting legacy of one of England's noblest and greatest souls the work will continue to charm modern readers with its idealism, its sanity, its humour, and its grace. And nothing is surely more characteristic of the spirit of its author than the delightful irony with which he takes leave of his readers in uttering his direful threat to all those 'earth-creeping minds' who, despite the claims he had made so eagerly and convincingly, still remained deaf to "the planet-like music of poetry."

—*J. W. H. Atkins*

(11)

Sidney and His Contemporary Critics

It may be said that Sidney is not attacking the prejudices of his own time ; that he is merely attacking argument of Plato, Greek meeting Greek. To which we may answer that he does not seriously deal with the argument of Plato, and does not touch his fundamental position, which is philosophic. On the other hand, he definitely indicts the view of poetry current in his day. "From almost the highest estimation of learning" he says, it "is fallen to be the laughing-stock of children." And he speaks of the learned who inveigh against poetry.

And first, truly to all of them that professing learning inveigh against poetry may justly be objected, that they go very near to ungratefulness, to seek to deface that, which in the noblest nations and languages that are known, hath been the first lightgiver to ignorance, and first Nurse. whose milk by little and little enabled them to feed afterwards of tougher knowledges : and will they now play the Hedge-hog, that being received into the den, drove out his host ? Or rather the vipers, that with their birth kill their parents ?

—R. A. Scott-James

(12)

Poetry and Morality

Sidney speaks throughout as if the learned and respectable opinion of his time was hostile to poetry—so hostile, indeed, that it was worth his while to write an *Apology* to show that poetry does not deserve this scorn, and that it has the very qualities which that respectable opinion would respect ! namely, that it instructs, that its purpose is moral, that it is consistent with correct religion.

And in order to help his case he weeds out the poetry which does not deserve the name. He pours scorn upon the "mongrel Tragicomedy" of his time—the "gross absurdities," which are "neither right Tragedies nor right Comedies" : "mingling kings and clowns, not because the matter so carrieth it" : thrusting in "clowns by head and shoulders, to play a part in majestical matters, with neither decency nor discretion." He exposes the false view that "there is no delight without laughter", and blames writers who "stir laughter in sinful things ; are rather execrable than ridiculous : or in miserable, which are rather to be pitied than scorned."

—R. A. Scott-James

(13)

The Genuine Poets

Let us frankly recognise, he means, the faults of writing which masquerades as poetry, but do not let us make true poetry chargeable with those faults. And so we return to his main argument, that poetry which is really poetry is "honest", and does not deserve to be made "the laughing-stock of children." Science, history, philosophy morals, are all under debt of gratitude to the poets who went before "with their charming sweetness" to draw "wild untamed wits to an admiration of knowledge." "Let learned Greece, in any of her manifold sciences be able to show me one book before Musaeus, Homer, and Mesiodus all three nothing else but poets...The philosophers of Greece durst not for a long time appear to the world but under the mark of poets. So *Thales,*

Empedocles, *Parmenides* sang their natural philosophy in verses : so did *Pythagoras* and *Phocylides* their moral counsels : so did *Tyrtaeus* in war matters, and *Solon* in matters of policy : or rather, they being poets did excercise their delightful vein in those points of highest knowledge, which before then lay hid to the world."

—*R. A. Scott-James*

(14)

Universality of Poetry

He pays a higher tribute—as we should think it—to poetry when he shows that the poets have not only been scientists, historians, philosophers, but that the calling of poetry is one which has never failed to command the highest admiration. Even in the body of the work of Plato the philosopher, "though the inside and strength were philosophy, the skin as it were and beauty depended most of poetry." Among the Romans a poet was called *vates*—a diviner, foreseer, or prophet--"so heavenly a title did that excellent people bestow upon this heart-ravishing knowledge." And may he not even presume to say that "the holy David's psalms are a divine poem ?"

For what else is the awaking his musical instruments : the often and free changing of persons ; his notable *Prosopopoeias* when he maketh you as it were, see God coming in his Majesty ; his telling of the Beast's Joyfulness, and hills leaping, but a heavenly poesy, wherein almost he showeth himself a passionate lover of that unspeakable and everlasting beauty to be seen by the eyes of the mind, only cleared by faith ?

—*R. A. Scott-James*

(15)

The Value of Poetry

Thus carried away by the critical instinct of a poet Sidney is better than his argument. Having set out to appease the censors of his time, to prove that even if poetry could delight it was not therefore a "wanton of the theatre," to convince them that if conformed to their didactic standards and satisfied their school-masterish demand for edifying knowledge, we find him declaring in spite of himself that it stands supreme in its own right, and that the glory of the Psalms of David was nothing else but the glory of poetry. While, like Horace, he still maintains that "delightful teaching is the end of poesy," he is already beginning to put more emphasis on "delight." It may be that he was ready to go even further, and that he would approve the Judgement (recalled for us by Professor Saintsbury) uttered by Italian, Minturno, in 1559 -

"It will be the business of the poet," said the critic, using words which recall the doctrine of Longinus, "so to speak in his verses that he may teach, that he may delight, that he may move."

For all his desire to commend poetry to the good opinion of the pundits, for all his willingness to borrow their standards and worn jargon, Sidney, too, knew that poetry can "move." "I never heard the old song of *Percy* and *Douglas*," he writes, "that I found not my heart moved more than with a Trumpet."

—*R. A. Scott-James*

(16)

Renaissance Criticism

The great literary creations of Elizabethan England were certainly no slavish imitations of the classics or even of Italian literature. They cannot be attributed to the steady preparatory influence of a criticism based upon the methods and ideals of the Greeks. They are the result of a continuous growth of literary work during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries made possible by the gradual removal of restraints upon the Press. They were modified, of course, by Greek, Latin, and Italian influences, and by the talk of men who had travelled and studied. Though the great Elizabethan writers were men who either had a classical education, or had come under the influence of classical scholars, they had not yet acquired the habit of thinking that their experiments in the English tongue must be exclusively modelled upon the ancients. That was yet to come. At present they were rather disposed to carry on existing English traditions, which in the case of drama had been handed on from the old Morality and the early Tudor play; and though romance writers were disposed to turn to Italy for their plots, they modified, borrowed, and invented to their hearts' content. The play-wrights, the romancers, and the poets were romantic through and through, right down to and including the time of Spenser, Marlowe, Chapman, Ben Jonson, Shakespeare.

—*Sidney Lee*

(17)

Rediscovery of the Classics

So the great Revival of Letters should be thought of, not as a movement produced and inspired by reverence for the rediscovered classics, but as an escape from mediaeval bondage, a long process in the emancipation of the arts, hastened, and made brighter and sweeter, by the intelligent reading of ancient literature. Even in the last quarter of the sixteenth century it was still necessary to assert the right of poetry to exist for its own sake. Ideas die hard. The Roman Church had discouraged the Muses because they were

wantons, because they had a power and an influence which, not being hers, could only be those of the devil. When the church itself was discredited, the Muses did not at once become respectable. When the Roman Church ceased to be Puritan, Puritanism reasserted itself as a separate force in English life. It is a remarkable fact that as late as about 1581 Sir Philip Sidney should still think it necessary to write an *Apology for Poetry* (published 1595).

—*Sidney Lee*

(18)

The Poets as Moral Teachers

Poetry is the record of imaginary events, but it is more : the events must be described in a lively and persuasive style. And when Sidney goes on to cite the historian Herodotus as a poet because "both he and all the rest that followed him either stole or usurped of poetrie their passionate describing of passions, the many particularities of battailes, which no man could affirme" he is adding passion, forceful and moving expression, to his criteria, so that by poetry he now means fiction plus liveliness plus passion. If a lively and passionately expressed invention can be employed as a means of conveying historical or moral truths, then poetry is justified—but not as an art in itself so much as one among many ways of communicating kinds of knowledge which are themselves known independently to be valuable. At this stage in Sidney's argument, poetry is simply a superior means of communication, and its value depends on what is communicated. And to determine that value we have to go to other arts—to history or moral philosophy.

—*David Daiches*

(19)

Significance of the Poetic Truth

Sidney is here expressing a view that has long been popular and is still very common among lay readers of poetry. Imaginative literature can be justified if it communicates historical or philosophical or moral truths in a lively and pleasing manner, and if this means telling things which are not literally true, the untruths can either be interpreted allegorically as ways of representing an underlying general truth, or, in the case of the historical poet, as plausible reconstructions of what might well have occurred. This latter point brings us fairly close to Aristotle's notion of probability, but it stops short of it. Sidney does not go on to say that the "fained" speeches of the historian can give a more fundamental insight into the truth of the human situation than the factual historical record ; he does not, in fact, at this stage in this argument go further than to say that the historian, in his search for a means of communicating what he has to say in a lively an

convincing manner, is led to draw on his own invention and thus to become a poet. When Herodotus describes "the many particularities of battailes, which no man could affirme" he is behaving like a poet, but the only conclusion Sidney seems to be drawing from this fact is that if historians use poetry then poetry must be a good thing. This is a curious kind of *argumentum and bominem*—the worth of an art depends upon the intentions and purposes of its user—and is far from a justification of poetry (in the sense of fiction plus liveliness plus passion) for its own sake. One can only begin to justify poetry for its own sake if one can isolate its differentiating qualities and consider what unique function poetry serves. Are fiction plus liveliness plus passion good in themselves, or good only if they serve as means to communicate kinds of knowledge which are known independently to be good ? Sidney does not here answer this question and although the tone of his argument suggests that they *are* good in themselves he does not tell us why. Later on, however, he gives this argument a new turn.

—David Daiches

(20)

Sidney's Reaction to Aristotle

In the last of the paragraphs quoted above, Sidney refers to Aristotle, quoting his famous dictum that poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history because it deals with the universal rather than with the particular. Nevertheless, Sidney's position is not Aristotelian at all. When he argues that the fictitious rendering of the poet is more effective than the true report of the historian, his point is that the ideal world of the poet shows things as they *ought* to be rather than as they *are* and is thus more conducive to virtuous action in the reader. "If the question be for your owne use and learning, whether it be better to have it set downe as it should be, or as it was, then certainly is it more doctrinable the fained *Cirus* in Xenophon than the true *Cirus* in Iustine." The key word here is "should". Sidney has changed Aristotle's probable "should" to a moral "should". To Aristotle, the poet wrote of what "should" be in sense of what was most probable ; his "should" was a "should" of probability. To Sidney, the poet wrote of what ought to be, in a purely moral sense. The world created by Sidney's poet is more edifying than the real world, not more true to the fundamental probabilities of the human situation or probable in terms of the self-consistent world which it creates.

—David Daiches

(21)

Poet as Creator

Thus though Sidney, like Aristotle, is concerned with replying to the kind of arguments against poetry that Plato brought forward,

his defence is basically different from Aristotle's. For Sidney the poet is the creator of a world which leads those who view it to follow virtue and shun vice.

> If the poet doe his part a-right, he will shew you in *Tantalus*, *Atreus* and such like, nothing that is not to be shunned, in *Cyrus*, *Aeneas*, Ulisses, each thing to be followed; where the Historian, bound to tell things as things were, cannot be liberall (without hee will be poeticall) of a perfect patterne, but, as in *Alexander* or *Scipio* himselfe, shew doings, some to be liked, some to be misliked.

—David Daiches

(22)

Poet's Superiority to Philosophers

The poet not only exceeds the philosopher in his ability to create the perfect example but also in his ability to move the reader to follow that example. "I think that no man is so much *philophilosophos* [a lover of philosophy] as to compare the philosopher, in mooving, with the poet." This comes to identifying poetry with rhetoric, the art of persuasion, as Sidney himself realizes later on in his argument. But at the same time it enables Sidney to find room in his didactic theory of poetry for the qualities of liveliness and vigor which he had already commended. However ideal the poet's world may be, however virtuous its heroes and however much "poetic Justice" may prevail in the course of the action, no reader is going to be "moved" to imitate that world in his own behaviour unless it be presented with such life and passion that he finds it irresistible. The delight which the reader has in reading of this ideal world and in responding to its vitality depends not on content but on form and style. Thus by his theory of moving Sidney finds a way of including the purely aesthetic qualities of form and style in his criteria of the good work of literary art.

—David Daiches

(23)

Modern Reaction to Sidney

Sidney was no less "sage and serious" than his friend Spenser. As passionate a believer in the "high seriousness" of poetry as Matthew Arnold three centuries later, Sidney was primarily a moralist. And he could enliven his morality with wit, highly intelligent as he was. A disciple of Horace, he had to join issue with Stephen Gosson. Then there was the formidable adversary, Plato. But Sidney's idealism stands him in good stead. He points

out that the poet, a creator out and out, can transcend Nature herself. "Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden". So the poet does not imitate the natural world in a servile fashion and offer something which is twice removed from reality. What he does offer is a heightened, idealized version of reality. It is thus that Sidney turns the tables on Plato : no less than Shelley, he uses Platonic idealism against Plato himself. As a matter of fact, in this as in many things else, Sidney will be Shelley's philosopher and guide.

Just as Milton's "sage and serious" Spenser could also be the "elfin poet" of Keats, the earthly Sidney could scale ethereal heights. He could talk eloquently and endlessly on the utility of literature. ("Lord, how I have babbled !" he might have said, as he once actually wrote to his brother.) But he could also hint at the supreme and infinite delight of "heart-ravishing" poetry.

—*Visvanath Chatterjee*

(24)

Glorification of Poetry

Great is the significance of Sidney's criticism for us. Living as we do in an age of anxiety, we desperately need something that will restore our faith in poetry as well as in ourselves. Sidney's *Apology* is no mere defence of poetry ; had it been so, it would have had at best only some negative virtues. The *Apology* is a glorification of poetry which is no less exalted because it is based on logic and common sense. Sidney can invest poetry with new meaning only because he has given new dignity to human life. His superficial didacticism should not be allowed to divert us from the profoundness of his vision. We need this vision as our own is fading fast, and where there is no vision, the people perish.

—*Visvanath Chatterjee*

(25)

Sidney and Ben Jonson Compared

Nothing will show this more curiously than the words in which Sidney anticipated (and perhaps suggested) Ben's censure of Spenser's diction as to the *Shepheard's Calendar*, especially if we remember that this was said by a personal friend and by an ardent lover of poetry. That there is something to be said against the dialect of the *Calendar* all reasonable critics will allow. As a poetic language it is, at its best, but a preliminary exercise for the glorious medium of *The Faerie Queene* ; it is awkwardly and in some cases incorrectly blended : and, above all, the *mere* rusticity—the "hey-ho" and the rest—is a dangerous and doubtful expedient. But observe

that Sidney says nothing of this kind. He "looks merely at the stopwatch". Theocritus did not do it ; Virgil did not do it ; Sannazar did not do it ; therefore Spenser must not do it. That his own elevation of a mere modern like Sannazar to this position of a lawgiver of the most tyrannic kind of an authority not merely whose will is law, not merely whose prohibition is final, but whose bare abstention from something taboos that something from the use of all mankind for ever and ever, that this did not strike Sidney as preposterous in itself, and as throwing doubt on the whole method, is wonderful. But even if he had stopped at Theocritus and Virgil, he would have been wrong enough. Here once more is the false Mimesis, the *prava imitatio*. Not only is the good poet to be followed in what he does, but what he does not do serves as a bar to posterity in all time from doing it.

—*George Saintsbury*

(26)

Sidney and Ben Jonson as Precursors of "Reason"

There is another point in which Sidney and Ben are alike, and in which they may even seem to anticipate the general adoption of "Reason", of the "Good Sense" as the criterian, which the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries claimed as their own, and which some recent critics have rather kindly allowed them. Sidney's raillery of the romantic life-drama, Ben's reported strictures on the sea-coast of Bohemia, and his certain ones on "Caesar did never wrong", etc. express the very spirit of this cheap rationalism, which was later to defray a little even of Dryden's criticism, almost the whole of Boileau's, and far too much of Pope's. The ancients, to do them justice, are not entirely to be blamed for this. There is very little of it in Aristotle, who quite understands that the laws of poetry are now the laws of history or of science. But there is a great deal of it in Horace : and, as we shall see, the authority of the great Greek was, during three centuries which form the subject of this volume, more and more used as a mere cloak for the opinions of the clever Roman. Meanwhile, such books as those of Webbe and Puttenham, such an ordeal by battle as that fought out by Campion and Daniel, even such critical *Jaculata* as those of Meres and Bolton, were all in different ways doing work, mistaken sometimes in kind, but always useful in general effect.

—*George Saintsbury*

(27)

Sidney as a Stylist

As a prose writer Sidney has also a distinct place of his own. The form and machinery of the *Arcadia* are again Italian or, more correctly, Spanish ; the classical scenery and imagery are the natural outcome of the renaissance ; but the harmonious beauty of the style

is Sidney's own. In appreciation of the charms of nature it is ahead of its age: and though its lack of plot and its prolix descriptions make it wearysome to the modern reader, it was by far the most 'popular Novel' of its time. The *Apology* does not labour under the reproach of prolixity or tediousness. Though some of its arguments and theories would be rejected to-day, it is full of insight and clear statement, and delivers sober judgement which are as applicable now as when Sidney penned them. The charm of the style has often been remarked, and it has been declared by competent critics to the first piece of really harmonious prose in our language. Without committing ourselves to so general an assertion, we may yet recognize the beauty of such passages as these: 'With a tale forsooth he commeth to you, with a tale which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner; and pretending no more, doth intend the winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue': 'So is it in men,—most of which are childish in the best things till they be cradled in their grave': or the description of the historian 'better acquainted with a thousand years ago, than with the present age, and yet better knowing how this world goeth, than how his own wit runneth; curious for antiquities, and inquisitive of novelties; a wonder to young folks, and a tyrant in table-talk': or the definition of learning as 'this purifying of wit, this enriching of memory, enabling of judgement, and enlarging of conceit': or of reading as 'the gathering of many knowledges'. Another noticeable feature of the essay is its originality. True, the ancients are ransacked for examples, and the dicta of Greek, Roman, or Italian writers regarded as settling questions, as though by the voice of nature: still the writer is also continually speaking of what he has seen and known. Thus the essay begins with a reference to a personal experience; the illustration from Italy, Hungary, Ireland and Wales are from his own knowledge; his references to West Indian customs are the fruit of its own intense interest in the great discoveries of the age, his own discontent prompts his reference to the 'over-faint quietness of the time,' his own taste is expressed in his criticism on the cold artificiality of the love poetry of the day, even to the pedantic tricks of 'coursing of a letter.' Though he uses Aristotle's and Scaliger's Poetics freely in his classification of poets, and in many of his definitions, yet he uses them with the independence which comes of study at first hand; and his classical quotations as a rule not too hackneyed or obvious, and seen generally to be made from memory and with such alterations as suited him. With no author was he apparently more entirely familiar than with Plutarch; a familiarity shown not indeed by direct quotation, but by numerous expressions which come evidently from an almost unconscious reproduction of thoroughly assimilated thoughts.

—*Evelyn S. Shuckburgh*

(28)

Poetry and Imaginative Literature

It is when Sidney submits his views on the nature of poetry itself, however, that he comes really to grip with his problem, and presents something more than a *prima facie* case on its behalf. He treats first of poetry in general, then of its different forms ; and his teaching consists of ideas gathered from various sources, ideas which are not always blended into a consistent whole, though they are successful in giving to poetry an added dignity and meaning. Worthy of note, to begin with, is the fact that under the head of poetry in general he includes apparently all imaginative literature, that is, literature into which the element of fiction entered, whether written in prose or verse. On this score, for instance, he claims that Herodotus had all the qualities of a poet, that Xenophon's political romance of Cyrus, as well as Heliodorus's romance, *Aethiopica* were really 'heroical poems' or epics ; while those, he added, who failed to see in Plato's prose Dialogues 'flowers of poetry, did never walk into Apollo's garden'. Furthermore, he categorically declares that 'it is not rhyming and versing that maketh a poet, no more than a long gown maketh an advocate' ; in short, verse to him is but an ornament and no cause to poetry. At the same time there is an element of inconsistency in the position he thus assumes. For elsewhere he allows that 'the exquisite observing of number and measure in words......did seem to have some divine force in it' ; and in treating later of contemporary poetry, it is to compositions in verse, significantly enough, that he confines his attention. The truth would seem to be that in denying verse to be the essential element in poetry he was following the lead of Aristotle and most of the Italian critics, Scaliger alone maintaining that verse constituted the 'matter of poetry, the raw material in which the poet worked. In practice, however, Sidney was conscious that verse, if not the essence, was at least a necessary and inseparable element of poetry. Poets, he stated had chosen it as their 'fittest raiment', as a form of expression which enabled them to speak in keeping with the dignity of the subject, and not loosely 'in table-talk fashion or like men in a dream'. And this conception, based on experience and shared by Minturno and other Italians, probably represents Sidney's true position in the matter ; though his description of verse as an added ornament fails to suggest its organic character and the vital relation existing between poetic thought and rhythmical expression.

—*J. W. H. Atkins*

(29)

As a Romantic Work

The characteristics which make the *Defence of Poesy* a great piece of criticism, and which at the same time note it as a romantic

work, for all its dependence on neo-classic learning, are, first, its vindication of the spirit of poetry as opposed to details of form or content; and, second, its democratic attitude—that is, to sweet reasonableness, its approval of what is genuine and impressive even where not justifiable by rules of art. There is nothing iconoclastic in Sidney's attitude towards rules. He treats them with respect and is willing to accept their validity where, as in the drama before 1580, violations had not justified themselves. But his fundamental position is a protest against dogma; it was dogmatic puritanism, as embodied in Gosson's *School of Abuse*, which occasioned the writing of the essay, if we may believe Spenser and the bibliographical evidence in the case.

—*Tucker Brooke*

(30)

Fact and Imagination

Sidney begins his defence of poetry by championing the superiority of imagination over fact. The poet, he says, is a finer influence than the historian, the philosopher, or the mathematician, because more truly than they he creates; because he does not simply analyse nature, but transcends her; because his end is less narrow and more ideal. Sidney's breadth of literary sympathy and his predominating romanticism are evidenced by the works which he selects for praise: Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde*, the *Mirrour for Magistrates*, Surrey (i.e., Tottel's Miscellany), *Gorboduc*, the *Shepherd's Calendar*, and the ballad of Percy and Douglas. The judicious Hallam has a remark on Sidney in relation to the literature of his time, which has been echoed in a mistaken sense as if his critical taste had been out of harmony with the true current of the age. "It is amusing to reflect," says Hallam, that this contemptuous reprehension of the English theatre (and he had spoken in as disparaging terms of our general poetry) came from the pen of Sidney, when Shakespeare had just arrived at manhood. Had he not been so prematurely cut off, what would have been the transports of that noble spirit, which the ballad of Chevy Chase could "stir as with the sound of a trumpet," in reading the *Faery Queen* or *Othello*.

—*Tucker Brooke*

(31)

Sidney's Contribution to Romantic Criticism

It is not the smallest proof of the fidelity of Sidney's *Defence* to the spirit of Elizabethan romanticism, that its temper seems so just to us who read it in the light of the literature that was to follow. No harder task for a critic could well be imagined than

that which Sidney accomplished : to write at the moment of Elizabethan dawn a sketch of the function and powers of poetry which Shakespeare, Spenser and Marlowe should not render obsolete. Though there are in his essay some generalities, orthodox in 1580, which Sidney would certainly have abandoned in 1600, there can be no question that he was inwardly adjusted to the romantic noontide he was not to see. Of the *Cambises* vein in tragedy he thought as Shakespeare thought. Let us remember to his honor that in judging the best tragedy of his lifetime, *Gorboduc*, which he praised as "climbing to the height of Seneca his style," he did not seek to fill the loftier niches reserved for *Doctor Faustus* and *Othello* ; and that in his mingled praise and blame for the *Shepheard's Calender* he seemed to sense the greater splendor of the *Faerie Queen*.

—Tucker Brooke

(32)

Two Major Heresies in "Apology"

There remain his two major heresies, the declaration that verse is not inseparable from poetry, and the denunciation of tragi-comedy. In both the authority of the ancients must bear again good part of the blame, but in both he has additional excuses. As to the "pestilent heresy of prose poetry," he is at least not unwilling to argue on the hypothesis that verse were necessary to poetry, though he does not think it is. He is quite sure that verse is anyhow a nobler medium than prose As for the plays there is still more excuse for him. His classical authorities were quite clear on the point ; and as yet there was nothing to be quoted on the other side—at least in English. Spanish had indeed already made the experiment of tragi-comic and anti-unitarian treatment ; but I do not think any of the best Spanish examples had yet appeared, and there is great difference between the two theatres. In English itself not one single great or even good play certainly existed on the model at Sidney's death ; and, from what we have of what did exist, we can judge how the rough verse, the clumsy construction, or rather absence of construction, and the higgledy-piggledy of huddled horrors and horseplay, must have shocked a taste delicate in itself and nursed upon classical and Italian literature. And it is noteworthy that even *Gorboduc*, with all its regularity and "Senecation", does not bribe Sidney to overlook at least some of its defects. He is here, as elsewhere,—as indeed throughout,—neither blind nor bigoted. He is only in the position of a man very imperfectly supplied with actual experiments and observations, confronted with stage of creative production but just improving from a very bad state, and relying on old and approved methods as against new ones which had as yet had no success.

—George Saintsbury

(33)

Their Ample Compensation

And had his mistakes been thrice what they are, the tone and temper of his tractate would make us forgive them three times over. That "moving of his heart as with a trùmpet" communicates itself to his reader even now, and shows us the motion in the heart of the nation at large that was giving us the *Faerie Queene*, that was to give us *Hamlet* and *As You Like It*. What though the illustrations sometimes make us smile ? That the praise of the moral and political effects of poetry may sometimes turn the smile into a laugh or a sigh ?

—*George Saintsbury*

(34)

Sidney's Debt to the Greeks

Let us take his *Defence of Poesie* for analysis. The main points of critical interest are a complex definition of poetry based both on Aristotle and Horace, an adoption of Aristotalian theory, making poetry a union of Philosophy and History thus making poetry the highest source of wisdom after the *scriptures*, transforming Plato into a witness for poetry, on the application of the principles and literary norms of Scaliger and Horace to English poetry.

—*A. G. George*

(35)

Redefinition of Poetry

Sidney's essential contribution to criticism lies in his redefinition of poetry in such a manner as to make the moral content of poetry a part of its essential requirement. Sidney is applying some of the Renaissance doctrine of ideality to poetry. Thus the *Defence of Poesie* is more a work of critical synthesis. It combines Plato's view with Aristotle's poetics. The teachings of Horace are also included. It is in fact the biggest attempt at critical synthesis. Sidney never advances a single original point of interest, even the new conception of his poetic imitation is the result of combining Aristotalian concepts with the neo-Platonic doctrine.

—*A. G. George*

(36)

A New Concept of Poetry

He transforms the concept of imitation into one of creation or ideal imitation according to which the poet imitates not

actualities but the ideal reality behind the actual. Now the ideal world of the poet is of importance because of its didactic power, and the poet by presenting an ideal world aims at instructing and delighting the reader. To quote George Saintsbury :

> The importance of this manifesto, both symptomatically and typically, can hardly be exaggerated. It exhibits the temper of the generation which actually produced the first fruits of the greatest Elizabethan poetry, it served as a stimulant and encouragement to all the successive generations of the great age. That Sidney makes mistakes both in gross and details...is of course undeniable. He had a good deal of the merely traditional mode of Renaissance respect for classical—and for some modern—authority.

And then he concludes :

> And had his mistakes been thrice what they are, the tone and temper of his tractate would make us forgive them three times over.

—*A. G. George*

(37)

Content of "The Defence"

Beginning with a touch of humour, on the tendency of everybody to extol his own vocation, he plunges almost at once, into the strong defence of poetry : from its age and wonders ascribed to it of old ; its connection with philosophy ; the way in which Plato is poetical even in his onslaughts upon it ; its time-honoured and world-spread vogue ; the high and incomparable titles of *poietes*, 'vates', 'maker', its command of every kind of subject vying with nature in something like creation ; its connection with Divinity itself. Then he sketches its kinds, and insists upon the poet's nobleness as against all competitors, setting him above both philosopher and historian. Examples of excellence for imitation and of misdoing for avoidance, are given. The poet has all "from Dante his heaven to his hell" under the authority of his pen. After much this, he returns to the kinds—examining and dismissing the objections to pastoral elegy and what not. At this point he makes a sweep towards his special subject of drama, but touches it lightly and goes off to the heroic, whence his preamble or exposition being finished, he comes to 'poet-haters', the name and even the person, of Gosson being carefully left in obscurity. He examines and dismisses once more the stock objections—waste of time, lying, encouragement of evil desires etc. and, of course, sets the excellence of use against the possibility of abuse. And so, all generalities done (the famous commendation, of *Chevy Chase*, Percy

and Douglas has occurred long before) he shapes his concluding course towards English poetry, to find out why England has, 'growne so hard a step-mother' towards poets ; why there is such a cold welcome for poetry here. And at this point both the most strictly genuine criticism and the most piquant oddity of the piece begin, though it would be very unfair to Sidney not to remember that he is writing just after *The Shepheard's Calender* had appeared, in the mere overture of the great Elizabethan concert.

—George Saintsbury

(38)

Sidney's Art and Diction

On the whole Sidney agrees with Gosson in holding existing English literature cheap, especially English drama, but he condemns it not for reasons of morals but because the works he considers seem to him weak, mediocre, ridiculous, bereft of art. Of poetry in itself he has the most exalted conception. The poet is for him the first law-giver, the *vates*, superior both to the historian, who is chained to reality, and to the philosopher, who is obliged to be constantly severe and abstract. The poet paints the ideal with beguiling charm. Far from softening men, poetry has been a chief awakener of the warlike spirit and the virtues of slavery. Even a popular, ill-rhymed ballad like *Chevy Chase*, 'sung but by some blind crowder with no rougher voice than the rude stile', even the Arthurian romances with all their absurdities, are a call to man's courage and his desire for glory. In conclusion, Sidney declares that although English literature is still poor, it seems to him capable of high destinies.

—Legouis and Cazamian

(39)

An Eloquent Style

The style of the *Defence of Poesie* is eloquent, frequently poetic, but much less decorated, both franker and more virile, than *Arcadia*. Sidney makes fun in it of Euphuism, proposes Demosthenes and Cicero as models, and protests against the abuse of literary ornaments. 'For now they cast sugar and spice upon every dish that is served at the table : like those Indians not content to wear ear-rings at the fit and natural place of the ears, but they will thrust jewels through their nose and lips, because they will be sure to be fine.'

—Legouis and Cazamian

(40)

Poetry and Other Literary Genres

If the theoretical side of Sidney's theory enables him to lay such emphasis on "moving" and thus insist on the importance of a lively and passionate style, it should be noted that his insistence that the function of poetry is to show forth an ideal golden world instead of imitating the brazen one of actuality enables him to construct a hierarchy of literary forms. He can defend satire as a kind of poetry that laughs man out of his folly, comedy as making the common errors of life seen more ridiculous, and tragedy as showing the awful consequences of tyranny so that kings will fear to be tyrants (this last being perhaps the most inadequate of all Sidney's definitions), but the kind of poetry which paints directly the kind of virtue to which the readers are to be drawn will be the highest kind. That is heroic or epic poetry, "for by what conceit can a tongue be directed to speak evil of that which draweth with it no lesse Champions than *Achilles*, *Cyrus*, *Aeneas*, *Turnus*, *Tideus*, and *Rinaldo* ? Who not only teach and move to a truth, but teacheth and moveth to the most high and excellent truth ; who maketh magnanimity and justice shine throughout all misty fearfulness and foggy desires......But if anything be already said in the defence of sweet poetry, all concurreth to maintaining the Heroical, which is not only a kind, but the best and the most accomplished kind of poetry."

Sidney, then is able to answer the Platonic and the Puritan objections ; he can find room for a criterion of style while insisting on a didactic content, and he has some ideas of a hierarchy of literary genres.

—David Daiches

11

Selected Critical Questions With Answers

Q. 1. Assess Sidney's contribution as a critic. Can he be regarded as the father of English criticism ?

Or

Q. 2. To what extent is Sidney the critic a 'classicist' ? Do you detect any 'romantic' traits in him ?

Or

Q. 3. Consider the view that though by training Sidney is a 'classicist', he is by taste and temperament a 'romantic'.

Or

Q. 4. Write a note on Sidney's originality as a critic.

Or

Q. 5. Write a short essay on Sidney's achievement as a critic.

Or

Q. 6. Was Sidney a classical critic or a romantic one or both ? Give reasons for your answer.

Or

Q. 7. Examine the general point of view adopted by Sidney in his *Apology for Poetry*, and his gifts as a critic.

Or

Q. 8. Examine the merits and limitations of Sidney as a critic.

Introduction of Aristotelianism

Sir Philip Sidney's position, achievement and influence in the history of English criticism can hardly be exaggerated. The importance of his manifesto, *An Apology for Poetry*, cannot be equally

overemphasized. Sidney's tract is not a mere defence of poetry. Both symptomatically and typically, Sidney's *Apology* is the most important document of the Sixteenth Century. It exhibits the temper of the generation which actually produced the first fruits of the greatest Elizabethan poetry. It served as a stimulant and encouragement to all the successive generations of the great age.

Spingarn points out : "The introduction of Aristotelianism into English was the direct result of the Italian critics ; and the agent in bringing this new influence into English letters was Sir Philip Sidney. His *Defence of Poetry* is a veritable epitome of the literary criticism of the Italian Renaissance ; and so thoroughly is it imbued with this spirit that no other work, Italian, French or English can be said to give so complete and so noble a conception of the temper and principles of Renaissance criticism." What strikes us especially when we seek to estimate Sidney's book as a whole is that from beginning to end he respects the precepts of the ancients and unreservedly condemns the literary methods, his own as well as those of others which were practised in his time.

Note of Originality

Sidney's *Defence of Poetry* is the first original attempt to deal with the poetic art practically and not thoretically. "The first sign of literary appreciation", says Atkins "is to feel ; and not the least of Sidney's achievement as a critic was the early recognition of that fact. His *Defence* is the key to an understanding and appreciation of Elizabethan poetry and poetic theory." Sidney has given us many new points about a poet. For instance he is saying that the world invented or created by the poet is a better world than the real one. It is not the exercise of his imagination that justifies the poet, but the exercise of his imagination to create a better world. The real world is "brazen, the Poets only deliver a golden". Only the poet can, by his invention, produce something that goes beyond nature. The lovers of fiction are truer than those of real life ; its friends are more 'constant', its warriors more 'valiant', its princes more 'right', its heroes more 'excellent' in every way. It may be noted that for Sidney the poets' world is not better than the real world in some special poetic way, in that it is more probable in the Aristotelian sense, for example, but it is better on standards we apply in ordinary life. Flowers smell sweeter in the works of the poets than they do in real gardens.

Atkin's View

J. W. H. Atkins holds : "What gives to the work (*Apology*) its undoubted value is its originality, the skill with which Sidney has drawn on earlier teaching, selecting, adapting and fusing together ideas gathered from many sources, in order to set forth ultimately his own conception of poetry, independently arrived at. Thus apart

from the Italians, he makes use of Plato and Aristotle, Horace and Plutarch ; but like Horace, he subscribes to the authority of no one school of thought. His treatment throughout is of an eclectic kind ; his conclusions are the result of personal reflexion as well as wide reading ; and upon them is stamped the impress of a lofty personality."

Sidney's Independent Approach

At the same it cannot be doubted that Platonic influence played a considerable, perhaps a predominant part in shaping his views, owing to some affinity of spirit. To him poetry was a natural human activity, enabling men to sing of beauty and truth, and to satisfy their longings for a world transformed, thus nurturing in them what was good and noble. Moreover, so far from being merely an instrument for moral teaching, it was a concrete and inspiring revelation of human ideals and thus, in a sense, a "criticism of life".

Originality in Presentation

The originality of his work is not confined solely to its subject-matter ; in the manner of presentation, too, will be found a freshness and vigour, characteristic of Sidney alone. Writing for courtly circles and in a vein far removed from the fantastic and pedestrian styles of contemporary pamphlets and disputations, he achieved a form of expression unsurpassed e 'en in an age of daring experiments in prose. Nowhere do we finu the same happy mingling of the ideal and the practical, the same blend of dignity and humour, of sincerity and irony, of controlled enthusiasms and racy colloquialisms ; or again, that unstudied simplicity and grace which everywhere pervade the work.

The Romantic and the Classical Element in Sidney

It is a well-known fact that the Elizabethan critics have been largely influenced by classical tradition in criticism. The classical writers who are supposed to have inspired them are Plato, Aristotle and Horace. Sidney, in his *Defence* has pointedly alluded to Plato's theory of Divine Love. When discussing the divine nature of poetry he uses the phrase "that unspeakable and everlasting beauty". Similarly he is indebted to Aristotle as he accepts the true implication of his theory of *Mimesis* or Imitation. The act of imitation is something that takes its cue from nature. If nature itself is *natura naturans*, poetry is *ars naturana*. Besides his distinction between poetry which is more philosophical and history which is more particular has also an Aristotelian basis. Spingarn has therefore rightly remarked : "The introduction of Aristotelianism into England was the direct result of the Italian critics ; and the agent in bringing this new influence into English letters was Sir Philip Sidney."

Sidney and Horace

Sidney's classicism is also apparent in his allusions to Horace who has been an abiding influence on English criticism during the Renascence and afterwards. "Elizabethan critics and especially Sidney were well-versed and well-read in Cicero and other critics who had laid stress on the principles of decorum. It is, however, owing to its great significance in Horace's *Ars Poetica* that the doctrine became so influential in Renaissance English criticism. Sidney can never approve of the mingling of tragedy and comedy since it violates the principle of decorum. It is not for him to appreciate mirth in funeral or dirge in marriage or to weigh delight or dole in equal scale. He has nothing but contempt for mongrel tragi-comedy." Sidney uses the word 'decency' in this connexion which is his synonym for 'decorum'.

Romantic Traits

To the extent to which Sidney was indebted to Plato, Aristotle, Horace and the Italian interpreters of the classical literature, such as Boccaccio, Minturno, Scaliger the Elder and Castelvetro, Sidney was truly a classicist. But with all his zest for classicism, there is distinct romantic trait visible in Sidney. It was only a bold romantic spirit in Sidney that waxed so eloquently in praise of the ballad "Chevy's Chase". No other critic of his age would ever dream of writing so eloquently of this genre of poetry. As a critic observes : "Sidney's love of beauty, his idealism, his liberal outlook and his spirited style are all indicative of the romantic traits that characterize his Apology." Wimsatt and Brooks maintain that "the sources of Sidney's *Defence* were classical but the spirit was not very sternly classical. Sidney sends up the joyous fireworks of the Italian Renaissance. His colours are enthusiastic, neo-Platonic, ideal, purple and gold. The motion is soaring. He is essentially a theorist of exuberant imagination. Broadly speaking Sidney typifies and illustrates the dual Renaissance tendency—the simultaneous presence of the romantic and the classic."

A Distinguished Courtier Critic

Thus Sidney occupies an enviable position in the history of English criticism. He inherited no tradition; he helped to create one for his successors. He is indeed the father of English criticism just as Chaucer is the father of English poetry. The *Apology* is the first important landmark in the history of literary criticism in England and an epitome of whatever was significant in the Mediaeval tradition as well as in the contemporary critical thoughts in Italy. Deeply coloured though it is with the eclectic temper of the age and its didactic bias, its intrinsic and lasting value as the first piece of creative criticism cannot be emphasized, apart from its importance

in literary history in terms of its influence on critics in the following epochs.

Sidney's Defects

That Sidney makes mistakes both in gross and detail—that he even makes some rather serious mistakes from the mere "point of view of the examiner"—is of course undeniable. He has a good deal of the merely traditional mode of Renaissance respect for the classical—and for some modern—authority. Whatever his limitations, Sidney, if not a critic par-excellence, is "the English prototype of Castiglione's Courtier—practical, serious, lively, intelligent. These four words sum up Sidney the critic no less than Sidney the man."

Q. 9. In what ways is *An Apology for Poetry* a typical specimen of Renaissance criticism?

Or

Q. 10. "*An Apology for Poetry* is an epitome of Renaissance criticism." Discuss.

Or

Q. 11. "The importance of this manifesto (*The Apology*), both symptomatically and typically can hardly be exaggerated" (Saintsbury). Comment.

Or

Q. 12. Why was it necessary for Sidney to defend poetry? How did Sidney react to Stephen Gosson's *School of Abuse*?

Or

Q. 13. "No other critical work, as broad and as much alive, was written in this period." Do you think that Sidney's "Defence of Poetry" fully deserves this praise?

Or

Q. 14. What views of poetry were current at the time when Sidney wrote his "Apology"? How does he controvert them?

Or

Q. 15. "*The Apology* is a glorification of poetry which is no less exalted because it is based on logic and common sense." Elucidate.

Renaissance Defined

The term 'Renaissance' means 're-birth'. It is used specifically to denote the great spiritual and mental rebirth which marked the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the modern world.

For the first time, in the 16th century, since the civilization of the ancient Rome had crumbled away before the inroads of the Northern barbarians, England following in the wake of Italy and France stirred from a slumber of the spirit to which her ignorance of her past, her unsettled history, and the authority of the Church had condemned her.

Humanism and The New Learning

With the new awakening, one comes across a steady growth of influences which were to contribute to the great intellectual awakening of the century. Because of the New Learning, not only the poetry of Homer, but the philosophy of Plato and the criticism and science of Aristotle was revealed to the wondering eyes of the awakening West.

This re-discovery and re-interpretation of antiquity gave birth to a new culture—that of humanism. The humanists were directed by the classics to a new and ardent interest in mankind. Italian humanists, like Cosimo de Medici and his grandson Lorenzo the Magnificent, became the munificent patrons of scholarship and the Arts.

Independence of the Critic

It is for the first time in the period of Renaissance that English criticism develops itself, if not with entire independence, yet with sufficient conformity to its own needs. And, for the beginnings of modern literary criticism one has to "look to Italy of the 14th and 15th centuries to that formative period of Renaissance which had drawn its inspiration from the Revival of Learning and the renewed study of the classical literature of ancient Greek and Rome." Spingarn says: "The doctrines discussed by Sidney had been receiving very similar treatment from the Italians for over half-a-century; and it can be said without exaggeration that there is not one essential principle in the *Defence of Poesy* which cannot be traced to some Italian treatise on the poetic art." The age of Renaissance of which Sir Philip Sidney is the first landmark, is the first period of the influence of Italian critics.

Renaissance Criticism and Sidney

Sidney's *Apology for Poetry* is a product of Renaissance. Sidney's contemporaries had studied the general theory of poetry, not for the purposes of enunciating rules or dogmas of criticism, but chiefly in order to defend the poetic art, and to understand its fundamental principles. "With Ben Jonson the study of the art of poetry became an inseparable guide to creation; and it is this element of self-conscious art, guided by the rules of criticism, which distinguishes him from his predecessors" (Spingarn).

Origin of "The Apology"

Why did Sidney write his *Defence*? It is suggested that it was written as a retort to Gosson's attack (dedicated to Sidney) though he never mentioned Gosson or *The School of Abuse* by name. Stephen Gosson was a native of Kent, born the year before Sidney, and educated at Christ Church, which he entered the year after Sidney left Oxford. *The School of Abuse* was produced in August 1579, followed soon after by the second part, of An Apology of *The School of Abuse*. This tract, however, though containing general reflections on poets is mainly concerned with the dramatic poets and the corruptions of the theatres. Though Sidney does not mention Gosson by name, his main purpose in writing his *Defence* was "to explain to an age confused and perplexed, what poetry really was, and what it stood for in the life of the community." He was concerned to defend poetry—by which term, as we meant imaginative literature in general—against the charge brought against it by the Puritans that it was immoral, debilitating, lying, and provocative of debauchery.

Sidney's Answer to Gosson

The basic question Sidney tries to reply in his *Defence* is : why is Poetry valuable ? After a short introduction, Sidney's essay falls into three parts : (i) A general defence of poetry, as the earliest form of literature, as holding up a mirror to nature, as contributing better than philosophy or history to the end of all teaching—virtuous action. (ii) The second part answers to objections to the several kinds of poetry, which are enumerated and classified. (iii) The third part forms an enquiry into the state of English poetry and the reasons for its disrepute, with certain suggestions. Each part ends with a recapitulation of the arguments employed. Unlike Gosson, Sidney takes a wide and Catholic view of poetry and of morality. Unlike Lodge he does not resort to a frequent and indiscriminate use of authorities.

An Epitome of Renaissance Criticism

Sidney's *Apology*, as mentioned before, is an epitome of Renaissance criticism. In everyone of his views, on the nature and function of poetry on the three unities, on Tragedy and Comedy, on Diction and Metre, Sidney represents contemporary trends. According to Wimsatt and Brooks : "*The Defence of Poesie* is both the English locus of closest contact with Italian criticism and a brilliant epitome of what was best in the spirit of that criticism. It (The Apology) is a kind of formal beginning of literary theorizing by an English man of letters and a brilliant enough one—written in the high enthusiastic, occasionally a-syntactic style of the gifted amateur champion, headlong to outdazzle the lowness and myopia of professional moral

grumblers. The essay reflects and telescopes not only the continental criticism of the century but a certain amount of classical Greek and Roman as well. Passages have been assigned to Minturno, Scaliger and Castelvetro. And latterly, the orginal sources of neo-classic criticism and anti-criticism, Aristotle's *Poetics* and Plato's *Republic*, Book X perhaps, in Latin Translations, (such as Pazzi's of Aristotle and Ficino's of Plato) have been urged as the true fountains of Sidney's learning. It is certain that he read little Greek, and it appears likely to us that he was either acquainted with contemporary interpretations of classical criticism than with the latter itself. But it all matters little. Sidney wrote, not a pedant's encyclopedia, but a gentleman's essay."

The Main Points

Sidney deals with the universality of poetry and its antiquity, and with illustrations from Ireland and Wales, and from Romans, Saxons, Danes, and Normans—that it found in every nation. Sidney's main concern is the defence of poetry in a manner answerable to the peculiar approach of the Puritan critic, that is didactic or moralistic. So he proceeds forth to convey that the poet images forth the great human virtues and attributes in an alluring manner in order that the readers may be induced to imitate them in their practical life by modelling their actual behaviours on those noble patterns.

Fruit of Inspiration

Again Sidney tries to represent what to him was the essential nature of poetry. That it was ultimately the fruit of inspiration, and thus 'a divine gift'. To him poetic imitation was really a heightening process, an exercise of the creative faculty. Commenting on the high flying liberty of conceit of the poet he states in lyrical strain that "Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as diverse poets have done......Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden" while Nature, he adds, "never produced so excellent a man as Virgil's Aeneas."

Poetry, History and Philosophy

Sidney next compares poetry with history and philosophy. He observes that poetry is superior to history since it is more philosophical and studiously serious. F. S. Boas says : "He proves himself in a fuller degree than any previous Englishman to be an understanding disciple of Aristotle." The poet is a better and more effective teacher than either the philosopher or the historian or other accredited apostles of truth and.morality.

Refutation of the Charges

Sidney also would like to meet the specific charges made against poetry. The four imputations are :—(1) Poetry is useless—

a waste of time, (2) Poetry is deceptive—the mother of lies, (3) Poetry is immoral—the nurse of abuse, (4) Plato would have none of it and so banished poets from his republic. Sidney refutes these charges one by one and states in reply that 'no learning is so good as that which teacheth and moveth to virtue, and that none can both teach and move thereto so much as poetry.' Dismissing the second charge as baseless he asserts that "of all the writers under the sun the poet is the least lier." The third charge—namely that poets are immoral—he rebuts by retorting that the fault is not something inherent in poetry ; rather, it is a case of man's misuse of poetry : ......"not ..that poetry abuseth man's wit, but that man's wit abuseth poetry." And finally though with considerable difficulty, he replies to the impeachment of poetry by Plato. He maintains that Plato was not against poetry itself, but against its abuse. Plato found fault with the poets of his time who were supposed to fill the country with the wrong opinions about the gods, making light tales of their unspotted essence, which were tending to corrupt the youth. But, in the opinion of Sidney, poets were not responsible for this sort of abuse because they simply imitated the practice or the view-point which was becoming popular and fashionable.

Major Heresies

Besides, there remain his two major heresies, the declaration that verse is not inseparable from poetry and the denunciation of tragi-comedy. In both the authority of the ancients must again bear the good part of the blame, but in both he has excuses. Though he concedes that "verse is anyhow a nobler medium than prose, he is not unwilling to argue on the hypothesis that verse *were* necessary to poetry, though he does not think it is."

Conclusion

In fine, Sidney's *Apology*, as Kenneth Myrick showed, has all the seven parts of a classical oration. First, there is the *exordium*, the capturing of the hearer's attention to what he is going to say. Next we have the *narratio* where he surveys historically the noble role of poetry. This is followed by *propositio*, resolving of what has been expressed along with a definition. The fourth is what he describes as *partitio* with its divisions and with a statement of objections. Then follows the *confirmatio* or proof. The sixth part he calls *reprehensio*, in which Sidney proceeds to meet the challenge of his opponents. Finally, we have the *peroratio* where the learned critic gives us a summing up of his position.

Q. 16. Write an essay on Sidney's view of poetry, indicating its most important function. How far is this view original ?

Or

Q. 17. Examine the two definitions of poetry given by Sidney.

Or

Q. 18. "Poesy, therefore is an art of imitation...a representing, counterfeiting or figuring forth" (Sidney). Discuss and comment.

Or

Q. 19. What are the special claims for poetry made by Sir Philip Sidney in his "Defence of Poetry" ?

Or

Q. 20. Critically examine Sidney's views on the antiquity of poetry.

Or

Q. 21. Write a short note on Sidney's views on the nature of poetry.

Or

Q. 22. Critically examine what Sidney says about the function of poetry.

Or

Q. 23. Comment on Sidney's use of the term 'Imitation' in connection with poetry.

Introductory

Sidney includes all imaginative literature under the head of poetry. Even the early writers of history used the manner of poets. Herodotus had all the qualities of a poet. Same was the case with Xenophon.

Poetry Defined

Sidney defines poetry as an art of imitation in accordance with Aristotelian theory and its function is to teach and delight. To quote his own words : "Poesy, therefore is an art of imitation, for so Aristotle termeth it in his word *Mimesis*, that is to say, a representing, counterfeiting or figuring forth ; to speak metaphorically, a speaking picture ; with this end, to teach and delight."

Idealization of Nature

Poetry does not only idealize nature ; it goes higher still. Poetry idealizes humanity itself. The poet does not imitate or represent or express or discuss things which already exist ; he invents new things. Invention is the distinguishing character of

the poet ; he creates new things by drawing on his own wit. In this way Sidney claims that the creative aspect of the poet's art is in itself valuable. He is thus the first protagonist of the imagination as such. Note how he proceeds :

> Nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done ; neither with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers nor whatsoever else may make the too-much-loved earth more lovely ; her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden.
>
> But let those things alone, and go to man—for whom as the other things are, so it seems in him her uttermost cunning is employed—and know whether she have brought forth so true a lover as Theagenes ; so constant a friend as Pylades ; so valiant a man as Orlando ; so right a prince as Xenophon's Cyrus ; so excellent a man every way as Virgil's Aeneas ? Neither let this be jestingly conceived, because the works of the one be essential, the other in imitation or fiction ; for any understanding knows the skill of the artificer stands in that idea or fore-conceit of the work, and not in the work itself. And that the poet had that idea is manifest, by delivering them forth in such excellency as he had imagined them. Which delivering forth, also, is not wholly imaginative, as we are wont to say by them that build castles in the air ; but so far substantially it works, not only to make a Cyrus, which had been but a particular excellency, as nature might have done, but to bestow a Cyrus upon the world to make many Cyruses, if they will learn aright why and how that maker made him.

Poet and Nature

Sidney is here making many interesting points. In the first place, he is saying that the world invented or created by the poet is a better world than the real one. It is not the mere exercise of his imagination that justifies the poet, but the exercise of his imagination in order to create this better world. The real world "is brazen, the Poets only deliver a golden". Only a poet can, by his invention, produce something that goes beyond nature. The lovers of fiction are truer than those of real life ; its friends are more 'constant', its warriors more 'valiant', its princes more 'right', its heroes more 'excellent in every way'. Flowers smell sweeter in the works of the poets than they do in real gardens.

The World of "Ideas"

The next point Sidney makes in the paragraph quoted above is one which might well have been used by Aristotle in an endeavour

to turn Plato's own notions against his attack on the poets. In creating this better world the poet has in view the *Idea* (in the Platonic sense clearly of the quality he is representing ; he is not imitating the idea as reflected palely in real life, but is directly embodying his own vision of the ideal. The poet's embodiment can then in turn be imitated by the poet's readers. Just as, for Plato, any human instance of constancy, courage, or any other virtue, represents an imitation of the idea of that virtue. The poet makes direct contact with the world of Platonic ideas, and thus Plato's charge against the poet, as someone who merely imitates an imitation, is dismissed.

A New Notion of Imitation

Sidney's main thesis therefore is that the real glory of poetry lies in the fact that it does not merely imitate but create. He almost proceeds to develop a theory of "ideal imitation", the notion that the "poet imitates not the mere appearances of actuality but the hidden reality behind them, but stops short of this to maintain the more naive theory that the poet creates a better world than the one we actually live in. He does not rest content with a mere escapist position. For Sidney the ideal world of the poet is of value because it is both a better world than the real one and it is presented in such a way that the reader is stimulated to try and imitate it in his own practice. Thus the Aristotelian notion of imitation is transferred from the poet to the reader. The poet does not imitate but create : it is the reader who imitates what the poet creates.

The Twin Purpose of Poetry

Taking from the Roman poet Horace the view that the poet both delights and teaches Sidney goes on to show that the poets "indeed do merely make to imitate, and imitate both to delight and teach, and delight to move men to take that goodness in hand which without delight they would fly as from a stranger ; and teach, to make them know that goodness, whereunto they are moved, which being the noblest scope to which ever any learning was directed, yet want there not idle tongues to bark at them."

Conclusion

Sidney thus concludes that the poet teaches by presenting an ideal world for the imitation of the reader. The perfection of the poet's world, it emerges later in Sidney's argument, does not consist in its being peopled with wholly virtuous characters, but in its heroes always being perfect in behaviour and successful in fortune and its villains always thoroughly and obviously villainous and doomed to a certain bad end. In the poet's world the righteous

always prosper and the wicked are never left unpunished. It is from this conception that we get the term "poetic justice".

Q. 24. Discuss Sidney's arguments for the superiority of poetry to history and/or to philosophy.

Or

Q. 25. It is a "perfect picture" that the peerless poet gives us. The philosopher can give only a "wordish description". Discuss.

Or

Q. 26. Make a comparative study of the functions of history and poetry, and show how the poet is superior to a historian.

Or

Q. 27. How does Sidney establish the superiority of the poet over the philosopher ?

Or

Q. 28. Comment on Sidney's defence against the various objections raised by puritans against poetry.

Introduction

In his inimitable style Sidney in "An Apology for Poetry" argues the superiority of poetry to both history and philosophy. He asserts that of all the traditional branches of learning there are four especially which seem to Sidney to contribute to this mistress-knowledge. They are theology, law, philosophy and history.

Philosophy Versus History

Sidney begins by stating that in the teaching of virtue in the first place, both philosophy and history play their parts.

Philosophy, for instance, expounds its nature by means of analysis and definition, treating of its general categories and specific results, its private and public aspects, thus providing precepts of general validity in their hearing on human conduct. History, on the other hand, concerned with an 'active', rather than a 'theoretical' virtue, teaches not only by precept or abstract argument, but by particular examples drawn from life which illustrate in concrete fashion what virtue really is.

Secondly, philosophy, which deals with abstractions is hard of utterance and misty to be conceived ; as such it is a poor guide for youth and appeals only to those already learned. History, with its concrete examples, presents but a medley of empirical facts from which general truths and the nature of virtue more especially but dimly and confusedly emerge.

Thirdly, while the approach of history is theoretical, the approach of history is pre-eminently practical.

Fourthly, as Sidney points out in an equally critical vein, though the principal basis of history is second hand sources and hearsay, history prides itself upon its authenticity. In Cicero's eloquent phrasing, it is supposed to be "the evidence of time, the light of truth, the light of memory, the directress of life, the herald of antiquity". Far from teaching by precept or abstract argument, history has recourse to concrete examples taken from life which clearly reveal what virtue actually is.

Poetry and Philosophy

Poetry, Sidney claims, is superior as a moral teacher to both philosophy and history, because it does not deal with mere abstract propositions, as philosophy does but with the concrete example, and as its examples are not tied to fact, it can make them more apt and convincing than anything found in history. The true nature of virtue is painted vividly and attractively, while vice, with equal vividness, is made to appear always ugly and unattractive.

Poet's Superiority Over the Philosopher

Moreover, observes Sidney, the poet is 'a greater teacher than the philosopher because of his capacity for moving the reader, which is well nigh the cause and the effect of teaching.' Philosophy, he explains, is scornful of pleasure and sternly abjures all emotional appeals ; whereas poetry attracts and holds the attention of all by its manifold delight. Plutarch decribes poetry as a 'speaking picture'. "Poetry", says Sidney, "was wont to array its teaching in the fairest colours resorting to the world of imagination from Dante's heaven to his Hell, and by making the use of words, set in delightful proportion, often with the enchantment of music." Thus, poetry, he maintains "doth not only show the way, but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way as will entice any man to enter into it. The philosopher showeth the way, he informeth you of the particularities, as well as the tediousness of the way......Now therein of all sciences is our poet the monarch. For he doth not only show the way but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way, as will entice any man to enter into it......he cometh to you with words set in delightful proportions."

Again the poet is endowed with a power to combine the functions of both the philosopher and the historian, for he can image the abstract concept of philosophy in a concrete, individual and human form to make it more attractive as well as effective. Moreover, the moral philosophers teach in an obscure way ; it is a teaching which the learned only can understand. In other words,

"he teaches them that are already taught". On the contrary, "the poet is the food for tenderest stomachs, the poet is indeed the right popular philosopher."

Sidney's Conclusion

Sidney therefore concludes that the poet couples the general notion with the particular example. "A perfect picture, I say, for he yieldeth to the powers of the mind an image of that whereof the philosopher bestoweth but a 'wordish description': which doth neither stroke, pierce or possess the sight of the soul as much as those illuminated or figured forth by the speaking pictures of poesy." This point he illustrates by a number of examples from Homer, Virgil, Chaucer and Sir Thomas More, and its conclusion embraces the laudable practice of Christ himself.

This, then, states Atkins "is the gist of Sidney's argument on behalf of poetry. With its lofty and effective teaching, its irresistible aesthetic charm, he claims for it no less than supremacy among the arts in virtue of its power of attuning the soul to high endeavour by means of glowing visions of the ideal." The philosopher with his learned definition of virtue, vice and matters of public policy or private government fills our mind with many, definite grounds of wisdom. But the poet improves on it inasmuch as he illumines it and elucidates it by the speaking pictures of poetry.

Q. 29. What major objections ("most important imputations") were levelled against poetry in Sidney's own day ? How does Sidney answer them ? What do you think of his refutation ?

Or

Q. 30. What were the various objections raised by the contemporary Philistines against poetry ? How does Sidney answer them ?

Introductory

In the third section of his tract *An Apology for Poetry*, Sidney turns to answer some specific objections ("most important imputations") that were being raised by the contemporary philistines and puritans against poetry.

Four Objections to Poetry

In the first place, it is objected that poetry is useless and a waste of time.

Secondly, poetry was the mother of lies, a collection of falsehoods.

Thirdly, it gave rise to evil fancies and had thus a degrading and enfeebling influence.

Finally, Plato would have none of it and so banished poets from his republic.

Sidney's Defence

Sidney gallantly defends poetry against the first charge, claiming to have already refuted it in establishing the fact that poetry is never a waste of time nor is it a useless branch of knowledge. The study of poetry is a most profitable exercise, for it imparts delightful instruction and inspires man to virtuous action.

As regards the second charge that poetry is deceptive, a mother of lies, Sidney dismisses it outright by stating that it is based on ambiguity and meets it by advancing the paradox that "of all writers under the sun the poet is the least liar". It is the astronomers, physicians, historians and others who inevitably make false statements. The poet affirms nothing and "therefore never lieth". What he offers is not fact but fiction ; and yet his fiction embodies truth of an ideal kind.

The third charge levelled by the contemporary puritans against poetry is that it is immoral ; it is the nurse of abuses · it corrupts men and has an effeminizing effect on the readers. They also contend that poetry infects us with "many pestilent desires" ; comedies, elegies, lyrics and heroic poems are all stained with the theme of love. To this Sidney answers that there was no doubt that a vicious treatment of love had not been altogether absent from earlier poetry, yet it would be sheer stupidity on the part of the detractors to think that the love theme in itself was bad or that it deserved any outright condemnation. Granted that such abuse really existed it was wrong to conclude that the fault was inherent in poetry itself ; it was mainly due to man's misuse of the same.

Finally, Sidney replies to the last charge of the detractors, namely, Plato's impeachment of poetry. It must not be forgotten that Sidney had the deepest reverence for Plato whom the former regarded as the "most poetical philosopher" of all the philosophers. Plato, it may be argued, did not banish poets from his republic on the charge of "effeminate wantonness" as his ideal state was not governed by the law of monogamy—'little should poetical sonnets be hurtful when a man might have what woman he listed'. "Plato found fault with the wrong opinions about the gods, making light tales of their unspotted essence, which were tending to corrupt the youth. But, in the opinion of Sidney, poets were not responsible for this sort of abuse because they simply imitated the practice or the point of view which was becoming popular or fashionable. In other words, Plato, in his view, had banished the abuse of poetry and not poetry itself.

Unconvincing Defence

Looking at Sidney's defence, we feel that the arguments he puts forward here are not only unconvincing, but both superficial and disappointing. After having gone through his discussion on the ideal poetic imitation or creation according to idea, we naturally "expect him to press the argument home at this point and neutralize the rigour of the Platonic attack with his own weapon." As a critic has put it rightly : "The country champion of poetry, thus does not measure sword with Plato, the supposed adversary of poetry, perhaps because he looks upon him as a votary in the temple of the Muses."

Q. 31. Why are the dramatic Unities so sacrosanct to Sidney ? What makes the usually sedate Sidney lose his temper in connection with tragi-comedy ?

Or

Q. 32. Discuss fully Sidney's views on the three Unities, and compare his views with those of Dryden and Johnson.

Or

Q. 33. Lack of the Unities in contemporary drama is its greatest defect, according to Sidney. Examine critically his views in this connection.

Or

Q. 34. What according to Sidney are the chief defects of contemporary drama ?

Introductory

In *An Apology for Poetry*, Sidney examines the state of contemporary drama and finds it faulty in the three unities of time, place and action, particularly the unities of time and place. These two unities, he observes, "are the two necessary companions of corporate action".

Aristotle and Dramatic Unities

Classical drama is generally supposed to observe three unities ; unity of action, unity of time, and unity of place. But a reading of *Poetics* may convince the reader that there is no warrant for all the three unities in the pronouncements of Aristotle on drama. "He expressly mentions and insists upon only one kind of unity, namely, the unity of action, which means that tragic action should be single and whole, and its various parts should be held together by the law of necessity and be subordinated to the general effect. It also implies the writer's disapproval of two actions of opposite nature, one tragic and one comic, being developed side by side in one and the same play.

About the unity of time Aristotle simply mentions that tragic action should confine itself to a single revolution of the sun or a slightly greater length of time. He is neither precise nor very particular about fixing the time limit. As regards the unity of place, that is, the confinement of dramatic action to one particular locality, he is quite silent.

Later Developments

It is clear, therefore, that the remaining two unities, of time and place—were the outcome of later discussions and interpretations. The unity of place, of course, was the result of the peculiar nature of the Greek drama in which the Chorus, a body of ideal spectators of the play in the play itself, was present from the beginning to the end. So far as the unity of time is concerned, its origin may be traced to the remark of Aristotle quoted above, which was later on interpreted and defined in precise terms.

Sidney's Condemnation

Now Sidney to whom the dramatic unities were so sacrosanct was very critical of contemporary drama for its total neglect of the unities. He says that one of the most serious defects of the contemporary drama is, namely the gross improbabilities caused by the neglect of the unities of time and place. He says that even in the finest of English tragedies, i.e. *Gorboduc*, unity of time and place have not been observed. In other plays, the matters are still worse. "That the stage should be deemed to represent now Asia, now Africa, now a garden, a rock, a cave, a battle-field ; or again, that in two hours the vicissitudes of a whole life story could be fitly unfolded—all this was manifestly sheer absurdity (i.e. inartistically imagined). The ancients, with few exceptions did never err in this way. It was therefore imperative for the moderns to observe these unities and thereby follow the ancients.

Unity of Time and Place

As already mentioned above that the unities of time and place were not formulated by Aristotle, though Sidney and his contemporary critics ascribed them to him. They were actually formulated by Renaissance critics of Italy and France and Sidney derived them probably from the great Italian critic Castelvetro. Criticising the contemporary dramatists for their failure in observing the unity of time Sidney says :

> Now of time they are much more liberal. For ordinary it is that two young princes fall in love ; after many traverses she is got with child, delivered of a fair boy ; he is lost, groweth a man, falls in love, and is ready to get another child, and all this in two hours' space : which,

how absurd it is in sense, even sense may imagine, and art with taught, and all ancient examples justified, and, at this day, the ordinary players in Italy will not err in. Yet will some bring in an example of *Eunuchus* in Terence, that continueth matter of two days, yet far short of twenty years. True it is, and so was it to be played in two days, and so fitted with the time it set forth. And though Plautus have in one place done amiss, let us hit with him, and not miss with him.

Unity of Atmosphere

Thus we notice that it was Sidney who for the first time insisted on the observance of the dramatic unities. His contemporary Ben Jonson's attitude was less stringent, and later on the attitude of both Dryden and Johnson towards the unities was much more liberal. Their hold over the English drama, gave way once for all when Dr. Johnson came out with his strong defence of Shakespeare's violation of these unities. Sidney also advocates the unity of atmosphere and it is for that reason that he strongly condemns the 'incongruous mingling of comic with tragic material'.

Q. 35. Analyse and comment on Sidney's review of English dramatic literature.

Or

Q. 36. What does Sidney tell us of (a) the true nature of tragedy, (b) of the state of English tragedy in his time ?

Significance of Sidney's Remarks

One of the most significant parts of *An Apology for Poetry* deals with Sidney's remarks on English dramatic literature, particularly his remarks on the English Tragedy. Sidney, it is rather surprising, dwells more on the defects of English drama than on its merits. "As for the plays", states George Saintsbury, "there is still more excuse for him. His classical authorities were quite clear on the point : and yet there was nothing to be quoted on either side—at least in English. Spanish had indeed already made the experiment of tragi-comic and anti-unitarian treatment ; but I do not think any of the best Spanish examples had yet appeared, and there is great difference between the two theatres In English itself not one single great or even good play certainly existed on the model at Sidney's death : and from what we have of what did exist, we can judge how the rough verse, the clumsy construction, or rather absence of construction, the entire absence of clear character projection, and the higgledly-piggledly of huddled horrors or horse play, must have shocked a taste delicate in itself and nursed upon classical and Italian literature."

Condemnation of Tragi-Comedy

Sidney is extremely critical of such Elizabethan dramatists who were attempting to write such plays as to mingle incongruously the comic with the tragic material. Worthy of note, in the first place, is the fact that on the general question of blending comic and serious matter he makes no absolute or unqualified pronouncement. Sidney condemns outright such tragedies which are neither right tragedies nor right comedies, "mingling kings with clowns and thrusting in the Fool by head and shoulders to play a part in majestical matters, with neither decency nor discretion, so as neither admiration and commiseration, nor the right sportfulness, is by their mongrel tragi-comedy obtained. He admits with characteristic candour, that tragi-comedies were by no means unknown to the ancients and 'yet they never or very daintily, matched hornpipes and funerals'.

Fine and Faithful Criticism

Now, looking at Sidney's remark on the contemporary tragi-comedy, we cannot but comment that his criticism is a fine and faithful representation of the conditions of popular Elizabethan stage, "confirmed as it is not only by the specimens of tragedies and comedies which have come down to us, but also by the constant reiteration of similar charges by critics who flourished in the following decades. It should be properly noted that, according to Sidney, a tragedy should not begin with a tedious account of the ultimate origin of the story but it should begin with some principal or significant point which world bring the reader at once to the heart of things. Unimportant parts of the story may be narrated but not represented on the stage. In this way, a tragedy would have a coherent and organic plot with a beginning, a middle, and an end.

Conclusion

Thus, it is clear, that Sidney's estimate of the English drama is not only just but also correct. His charge of its crudity and absurdity is also just and correct. Sidney is not opposed to a mingling of laughter and tears in plays provided such a mixture is done judiciously, which was not the case with play known to him. Again it was he who was the first to say that the function of tragedy is to cause *admiration* and *commisseration*, and not to bring about the *catharsis* of the tragic emotions of pity and fear. Spingarn has therefore rightly stated : "Dramatic criticism in England began with Sir Philip Sidney. Casual references to drama can be found in critical writing anterior to the *Defence of Poetry* ; but to Sidney belongs the credit of having first formulated in a more or less systematic manner, the general principles of dramatic art."

Q. 37. What are the observations of Sidney on (a) the true nature of comedy, (b) the state of English comedy in his time ?

Or

Q. 38. Analyse and discuss and comment on Sidney's assessment of the English comedy in the 16th century.

Or

Q. 39. What practical suggestions does Sidney give to make comedy more effective ?

Or

Q. 40. "Comedy is an imitation of the common errors of life" (Sidney). Comment.

Condemnation of Contemporary Comedy

Sidney's condemnatory criticism of the contemporary comedy is as much illuminating as his remarks on contemporary tragedy. Finding the comedy of his day wicked and odious, Sidney is very critical of the playwrights and actors who have brought it into disrepute so that there is no English comedy worth the name.

Comedy Defined

Sidney defines comedy "as an imitation of the common errors of life which are represented in the most ridiculous and scornful manner, so that the spectator is anxious to avoid such errors himself." Comedy, he says, is an imitation of the common errors of life. These errors are represented here in the most ridiculous and scornful manner, and the result is that no one would like to have any of these errors. So comedy, should have a corrective value. It is a form of satire, but the sting is not here direct or painful. Moreover comedy shows the "filthiness of evil", but only in our private and domestic matters.

Delight and Laughter

True comedy needs a synthesis of delight and laughter. The first requirement of comedy is laughter ; but the English Comic writers err in thinking that delight cannot be obtained without laughter, whereas laughter is never an essential effect of delight nor is it necessary to it. "Delight", says Sidney, "hath a joy in it either permanent or present. We feel delighted at the conveniency (harmony) to ourselves, or to the general nature." Laughter, on the other hand "hath only a scornful tickling, and it cometh of things not disproportioned to ourselves and nature". There can be delight without laughter and laughter without delight. For example, we are ravished with delight to see a fair woman and yet are far from

being moved to laughter. We laugh at deformed creatures, wherein certainly we cannot delight.

Defects of English Comedy

The greatest defect of the English comedy is that it has become almost a crude force which seeks to provoke an empty laughter. The English comic dramatists have failed to produce comedies that could effectively combine delight with laughter. And this combination he regards as productive of comedy in the true sense. As an instance of what he has in mind he recalls the situation of Hercules as described by Ovid "with his great beard and furious countenance, in woman's attire, spinning at Omphale's commandment." Here, he points out, over and above the 'laughter' caused by an amazing and outrageous spectacle is also the 'delight' arising from a realization of the vagaries of love ; and in such a situation, he suggests, are to be found the ingredients of genuine comedy, and 'that delightful teaching which is the end of poesy'.

Practical Hints Suggested

Having thus argued in favour of a more intellectual kind of comedy, Sidney proceeds to supply practical hints calculated to make such comedy effective.

In first place, recalling Aristotle's teaching Sidney points out that comedy has nothing to do with things evil and vicious ; such themes or characters, he maintains, merely excite aversion and call for stern treatment.

Secondly, painful human deformities should never be treated as comic material ; for such deformities are grotesque to look at and give rise to pity rather than amusement.

Thirdly, the proper material for comedy is to be found in human weaknesses and foibles of a harmless kind.

Fourthly, Sidney suggests some typical characters as proper to comedy. He recommends such characters as are reminiscent of the stock figures of Roman comedy. Such characters include a fussy courtier, a cowardly boastful soldier, a conceited pedant, and an awry-transformed (i.e., affected) traveller. In suggesting such characters, however, Sidney is not proposing to limit comedy to the use of these or any other stereotyped figures or types. To him, they are merely examples of human foibles, and most significant of all is the reason he submits for giving them his approval and for regarding them as, likely to give rise to 'delightful laughter'.

Finally, he recommends the inclusion of such characters in comedy that are actually drawn from the ordinary life of the time.

Such characters, he explains, are those 'which we play naturally'. It is here that we must commend Sidney for his originality of approach. He is suggesting a profound truth about comedy. It is a truth which Shakespeare seems to have first realized in his creations of Bottom and his crew. Sidney's greatest contribution to English dramatic criticism lies in the fact that "all the characters mentioned by Sidney are represented in Shakespearean plays".

Conclusion

Thus, it was Sidney who for the first time, has given us some most valuable comments on comedy. His attempt throughout is to advise the English dramatists produce "a more intellectual comedy resulting in delight of a satisfying and lasting kind" (Atkins).

Q. 41. Enumerate and define the principal sub-divisions of poetry postulated by Sidney. Is Sidney incomplete (a) by the standard of his own day, (b) by the standard of our own times ?

Or

Q. 42. Examine closely the views of Sidney on 'Lyric Poetry'.

Or

Q. 43. What, according to Sidney, are the various divisions and sub-divisions of Poetry ?

Sidney's Modifications

In his tract "An Apology for Poetry" Sidney turns to examine the several kinds of poetry with a view to defending them separately. Except in one case, i.e., the pastoral poetry, his classification is more conventional than logical. He adopts with some modification the traditional classification, the grouping, for instance, employed by Scaliger and Minturno. According to these scholars Poetry could be divided only into three broad divisions : (1) Religious Poetry, (2) Philosophical Poetry, and (3) Poetry which consisted of an imaginary treatment of human life. Of religious poets the stock examples were said to be Orpheus and Amphion. To these, however, "with their wrong divinity" Sidney adds the more notable biblical poets, David and Solomon, the writer of *Job*, 'Moses and Deborah in their hymns', all of whom had 'imitated the inconceivable excellencies of God'.

Philosophical Poetry

As regards the philosophical poets, Sidney takes over straight from the ancient authorities and includes in this class such poets a Tyrtaeus, Phocilides, Lucretius, Manilius, Lucan and others. He commends them for their delightful teaching ; but since they had

treated of 'things as they were or are', he is conscious of some inconsistency in his theorizing, though 'he cheerfully sidesteps the difficulty by adding that 'whether they properly be poets or no, let grammarians dispute'.

The Third Category

Sidney draws our special attention to the third category of poets, namely the 'right' kind of poets. Under this class Sidney includes such poets who deal with life 'imaginatively'. It is again of these that there are various sub-divisions. It is therefore their compositions that have to be classified into different literary genres. Thus we have the pastoral, heroic, lyric, satiric, iambic, comic, elegiac and other forms. This conventional classification, according to Sidney, was in some measure unsound, because it is partly based on subject-matter and partly on metrical compositions. And yet observes Atkins: "It was a timely reminder of poetic forms other than epigrams, epithalamia, figure-poems and the like, which mainly engaged the attention of his contemporaries : it was also an indication of the possibilities of poetry conceived on the lines of classical antiquity."

The Pastoral Poem

After having discussed the broad classification of poems into *religious, philosophical* and *poetic*, Sidney throws some side-light on the various sub-divisions of poetry as enumerated above. The first variety is the *pastoral poem*. The pastoral poem "shows the misery of the people under hard lords or greedy soldiers. It also shows how much good can be done to the poor by the rich and the powerful. "Sometimes, under the pretty tales of wolves and sheep, can include the whole considerations of wrong doing and patience ; sometimes show that contention for trifles can get but a trifling victory..." (Sidney). Obviously, such kind of poetry can do no harm.

The Elegiac

The *Elegiac* moves the heart with pity. It bewails the weakness of mankind and the wretchedness of the world and expresses pity for just causes of suffering. The *Iambic* rubs the galled mind "in making shame the trumpet of villainy, and by directly and openly crying out against naughtiness". The *Satiric* laughs to ridicule and by ridiculing makes a man laugh at folly and thereby laughs folly out of court. These forms, it is clear, have a direct moral end, though they reveal it and realize it in different ways.

The Lyric

Sidney, next, turns to lyrical poetry, because "other sorts of poetry almost have we none". Though not satisfied with the kind

of lyrical songs and sonnets, produced in his country, Sidney believes that the lyrical poetry could be most effectively employed in singing the praises of God as it has been done in the Psalms. To quote his own words, he says : "How well it might be employed, and with how heavenly fruit both private and public, in singing the praises of the immortal beauty, and the immortal goodness of that God who giveth us hands to write and wits to conceive." It is in course of this discussion of lyric poetry that Sidney presents us with that generous tribute to the ballad of *Chevy Chase* : "Certainly I must confess my own barbarousness. I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas that I found not my heart moved more than with a trumpet ; and yet is it sung but by some blind crowder with no rougher voice than rude style which being so evil apparelled in the dust and cob-webs of that uncivil age, which would it work, trimmed in the gorgeous eloquence of Pindar." Moreover the lyric itself is quite capable of arousing men from their lethargy and inspiring them to embrace warlike and noble deeds.

The Heroic or Epic

As regards the Epic or Heroic poetry, Sidney says that it "is the best and the most accomplished kind of poetry, and like the tragic poetry, above suspicion. It is herein that the heroic and moral goodness are most effectively portrayed. The Heroic portrays the actions and life of such heroes as Achilles, Aeneas, Cyrus, Turnus, Tydeus and Rinaldo. Apart from having the virtue of teaching and moving to the most high and excellent truth, the Epic "makes magnanimity and justice shine through the darkness of human fears and evil desires." It presents virtue in her most beautiful, and most noble form. It is both delightful and instructive. It not only presents noble examples of virtue and valour, it also teaches men to follow those actions in their own life.

The Comic

Another kind of poetry is Comedy which, as Sidney describes it, is an imitation of common errors in ridiculous fashion. It has nothing to do with evil or with painful weaknesses and drawbacks. Only such weaknesses and defects as are harmless can be the proper material for Comedy. Though Comedy is branded as "naughty" (wicked) a little consideration, however reveals that Comedy "only holds a mirror up to us, and it is indeed good for us to see ourselves reflected as we are. Comedy must not look merely laughter emerging from the scornful, but it must mix it with the delightful teaching.

Tragedy

The last division of poetry is Tragedy. Whereas Comedy warns men against indulgence in foibles, Tragedy, with its 'sweet

violence' reveals wickedness in high places and brings home to men the uncertainty of life. Tragedy deals with the fall of tyrants. Following Minturno Sidney says that it evokes admiration and commiseration, though he retains the neo-classical development of the Aristotelian 'terror', 'compassion' or 'pity'. By demonstrating the fall of man in high position Tragedy brings tears out of the eyes even of tyrants like Alexander Phaeraeus, who, "without all pity, had murdered infinite numbers, and some of his own blood ; so as he that was not ashamed to make matters for tragedies, yet could not resist the sweet violence of a tragedy." It will, therefore, be sheer absurdity to dislike Tragedy which is so instructive in a noble way.

Conclusion

Thus, judging from modern standards, it cannot be denied that Sidney's classification of poetry into different genres is very commendable. Poetry, in all its forms, provides illumination and guidance. Far from calling for scorn or censure they are held to be deserving of the highest praise and reverence. And as for the snarling critics, the poet-whippers', adds Sidney in a parting shot, with them 'it falleth out as with some good women who often are sick but in faith they cannot say where'.

Q. 44. What evidence of literary art do you find in Sidney's criticism ? What are the principal qualities of Sidney's prose style as illustrated in the "Apology" ?

Or

Q. 45. Write an essay on the permanent value of Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry*. Do you agree with the view that it is more a work of critical synthesis ?

Poetry Glorified

The significance of Sidney's criticism cannot be over-exaggerated. His manifesto, *An Apology for Poetry*, is not a mere defence of poetry ; it is "a glorification of poetry which is no less exalted because it is based on logic and common sense". "Just as", observes a critic, "Milton's sage and serious Spenser could also be the 'elfin poet' of Keats, the earthly Sidney could scale ethereal heights. He could talk eloquently and endlesslyon the utility of literature." Not unnaturally therefore, Sidney's *Apology* has been called "an epitome of Renascence theory". But that does not mean that Sidney has only summarised classical and Italian doctrines. This tract shows distinct marks of originality in selecting, adapting and fusing together ideas gathered from many sources, in order to set forth ultimately his own conception of poetry independently arrived at. Nor was the originality of the work confined solely to its subject-matter :

in the manner of presentation too, will be found a freshness and vigour—characteristic of Sidney alone.

Meaning and Value of Poetry

An Apology for Poetry is a valuable critical document. It interprets and comments upon all that was characteristic in the theories of literature current at that time. For the first time we notice a critic giving us a synthesis of the critical doctrines of Plato, Aristotle, Horace, Scaliger, Minturno, Castelvetro and a host of other Italian theorists. In his emphasis upon the Antiquity and universality of poetry, he is simply echoing the remarks of the humanist advocates of the imaginative literature in Italy and England. Same is the case with his concentration upon the didactic nature of poetry, and its influence in building a noble character for the performance of good actions. At the same time he is quite alive to the aesthetic appeal of poetry because of which it is superior both to philosophy and history. "In the discussion of poetry, we are aware of his indebtedness to Plato, Aristotle and Horace, not to speak of their interpreters of that age. But Platonic 'inspiration' and Aristotelian 'imitation' as well as 'teach', 'delight' and 'move' of Horace and Latin rhetoricians are mingled with mediaeval conception of 'dark conceit' or the allegorical nature of great poetry."

Contribution to Dramatic Criticism

Sidney's *Apology* is also important for his valuable comments on the contemporary drama. In his dramatic criticism the stress on Unities is reminiscent of Castelvetro and his compeers in Italy, while the peculiar sentiments of Tragedy—admiration and commiseration—bring to mind the approach of Minturno. "If the general description of tragedy glances at the Mediaeval conception, the reverence to stately speeches and moral gravity shows his indebtedness to Seneca. In the same way in his brief reference to the vagaries of 'the apes of Cicero and in the general criticism of the affectation of style, Sidney is in line with the enlightened opinion of his age."

His Essential Contribution

Sidney's essential contribution to criticism, observes A. G. George, lies in his redefinition of poetry in such a manner as to make the moral content of poetry a part of its essential requirement. Sidney is applying some of the Renaissance doctrine of ideality to poetry. Thus the *Defence of Poesie* is more a work of critical synthesis. It combines Plato's views with Aristotle's *Poetics*. The teachings of Horace are also included. It is infact the biggest attempt at critical synthesis. Sidney never advances a single original point of interest. Even the new conception of his poetic imitation

is the result of combining Aristotelian concepts with the neo-Platonic doctrine. Moreover his manifesto exhibits the temper of the generation which actually produced the first fruits of the greatest Elizabethan poetry.

Sidney as Prose-Stylist

Finally, a word about Sidney's prose. In the manner of presentation Sidney is remarkable. Freshness and vigour are characteristic of his style. Atkins says : "Nowhere else do we find the same happy mingling of the ideal and the practical, the same blending of dignity and humour, of sincerity and irony, of controlled enthusiasms and racy colloquialisms ; or again that unstudied simplicity and grace which everywhere pervades his work. As a fitting legacy of one of England's noblest and gentlest souls, his *Defence of Poetry* will continue to charm modern reader with its idealism, its sanity, its humour and its grace."

Conclusion

When all is said and done, the fact remains that Sidney may rightly be regarded a typical Renaissance figure in his eclectic temper, that is, in his openness to all critical ideas about literature current on the continent. He may not be a perfect critic. He is and should be described as the English prototype of Castiglione's courtier : practical, serious, lively, and intelligent.

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Chronology of Important Dates

1554 Philip Sidney born (30 November) at Penshurst, Kent ; eldest son of Sir Henry Sidney and Mary Sidney (daughter of John Dudley, Duke of Northumberland) ; named after King Philip of Spain.

1564 Sidney enters Shrewsbury School where he cultivates a lifelong friendship with Fulke Greville.

1568 Enters Christ Church, Oxford.

1571 Leaves Oxford without taking a degree ; becomes a courtier.

1572 Proceeds to Paris (May). Sidney, witnesses the St. Bartholomew's Day massacre of the Protestants (24 August). Leaves Paris.

1573 Sidney proceeds to Frankfort (March) ; meets Hubert Languet, a French scholar whose pupil he becomes. Follows Languet to Vienna.

1574 Visits Italy, Poland, Vienna.

1575 Returns to England (May).

1576 Sidney joins his father in Ireland.

1577 Sidney is sent, on diplomatic mission, to Germany. Returns to England (June), pays a visit to his sister Mary (1561-1626 ; married in April to Earl of Pembroke) at Wilton, and begins to write *Arcadia.*

1578 Sidney writes an able defence of his father's Irish policy ; becomes a friend of Spenser.

1579 Studies the use of Latin metres for English poetry with Spenser, Dyre and Harvey.

1579 Spenser's *Shepherd's Calender* and Gosson's *The School of Abuse* dedicated to Sidney.

1580 Sidney probably completes *Arcadia* and writes *An Apology for Poetry.* Alienates and causes the anger of Queen Elizabeth I by openly criticising her proposed marriage with the Duke of Anjou.

1581 Becomes Member of Parliament. Penelope Devereux (the Stella of his Sonnets) marries Lord Rich.

1582 Sidney accompanies Anjou to the Netherlands. Composes *Astrophel and Stella.*

1583 Sidney knighted (January). Is wedded to Frances Daughter of Sir Francis Walsingham.

1584 Sidney revises *Arcadia* ; begins translation of Du Plessis Mornay's *La Yerite' de la Religion Chrestienne.* Interested in Sir Walter Releigh's expedition to Virginia. Ambassador to France. Birth of Daughter.

1585 Sidney appointed joint Master of Ordnance. Attempts to join Drake's expedition to West Indies ; is recalled by Queen Elizabeth, and sent on Leicester's expedition to Netherlands. In November, 1585, made Governor of Flushing.

1586 Sidney wounded at Zutphen (22 September); dies of his wound at Arnhem (17 October). It is said that the wounded Sidney who was himself dying of thirst, passed the bottle of water to a dying fellow-soldier, saying "Thy necessity is yet greater than mine."

1587 Was given a ceremonious public funeral in St. Paul's Cathedral (16 February). His translation of Mornay (completed by Golding) published.

1595 Sidney's *An Apology for Poetry* published (two editions, one called *The Defence of Poesy*).

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